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GERMAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

by

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March 2016

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GERMAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ: A GLOBAL PROBLEM

In a period of just over four years, approximately 25,000 men and women from around the world have traveled to Syria and Iraq to participate in a violent civil war in the heart of the Middle East. While there are many belligerent groups in the region, the vast majority of incoming fighters have joined groups fighting under jihadist Salafist banners. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and affiliated groups claim the majority of such volunteers. While earlier jihadist causes primarily mobilized fighters from the Middle East and Central Asia, this current conflict has attracted Western fighters on an unprecedented scale. The best international estimates hold that over 4,500 fighters have left their comparatively safe and comfortable lives in the West to fight—and often die—in a bloody internecine struggle far from their homes.[1]

Several recent academic studies have provided macro-level explanations of foreign fighter mobilization as well as jihadist radicalization. These studies examine the recruitment strategies and messaging of jihadist organizations and identify the key components of the "radicalization puzzle."[2] Less emphasis is placed on empirically testing these theories through meso- and micro-level analyses. This study intends to provide such an analysis by examining a specific set of jihadist foreign fighters from just one Western country: Germany. The project will analyze background, radicalization, and network connection data on German residents who have traveled to the Middle East conflict area since 2011—examining how and why these fighters mobilized for a violent jihadist cause far from home. Analysis of this micro-level data will reveal whether empirical evidence supports the currently accepted theories on jihadist radicalization and foreign fighter mobilization.

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[1] U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel.* (Washington, DC: 2015), 6, 12.

[2] See for example David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010); Mohammed M. Hafez and Creighton Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (November 2015).

B. SIGNIFICANCE

The most pressing reason to study the current wave of foreign fighters is for the role they have played in the creation and rise of ISIS. From its modest beginning as an al-Qaeda franchise in 2003 to its current prominence as an ultraviolent, semi-functioning "Islamic" caliphate, ISIS has survived due to its ability to import continuous reinforcements of devoted fighters. Although militarily weak and an international pariah, ISIS has nevertheless managed to cling to a strategic no man's land in eastern Syria and western Iraq, where the security interests of at least a dozen nations and non-state actors collide. Despite U.S., Russian, European, and other regional states' military efforts to dislodge them, ISIS now occupies territory roughly the size of Great Britain, earns approximately $2 million in daily revenue through black market oil sales, and claims responsibility for terrorist attacks across the globe.[3]

Whether they intended to or not, most foreign fighters who have remained in the conflict zone have eventually ended up fighting for ISIS. As the Syrian civil war progressed and its savagery metastasized, ISIS gradually absorbed the majority of foreign recruits, attracting large numbers of defectors from other hardline Salafist groups. A European Union official recently estimated that 85% of foreign fighters arriving in Syria eventually find their way to ISIS.[4]

The second reason to closely examine the foreign fighter phenomenon is related to concerns about what could happen if and when these fighters eventually return home. Western governments worry that trained, battle-hardened jihadist fighters will find it difficult to reintegrate with their societies for practical as well as psychological reasons. Moreover, former foreign fighters will likely possess the training—and potentially the disposition—to do great harm. One scholar claims that one out of every nine returning foreign fighters is likely to conduct a "blowback" attack in their home country after

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[3] "The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon and Related Security Trends in the Middle East," Canadian Security Intelligence Service, January 2016, 18. www.csis-scrs.gc.ca.

[4] Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria," The Soufan Group, June 2014, 10. http://soufangroup. com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf.

fighting abroad.[5] In addition to concerns about their own citizens coming back from warzones, integrated Western nations must also worry about terrorist threats from citizens of allied nations. A returning foreign fighter with a European passport can freely enter any country in Europe's 26-nation Schengen open border zone—not to mention the United States—without undergoing additional border scrutiny or having to apply for a visa.[6]

Understanding foreign fighter mobilization is valuable because foreign fighters are often more destabilizing, more violent, and less amenable to de-escalation than local forces.[7] By providing an element of international legitimacy to their cause, foreign fighters also fulfill an important propaganda role for the groups they support. ISIS fighters show particular enthusiasm in this regard—often simulcasting their gruesome exploits to audiences back home through multiple social media feeds.

Given these concerns, it is in the national interest of Western states to try to limit both the frequency of radicalization as well as the flow of Western fighters to the Syrian conflict. A better understanding of the specific factors involved in foreign fighter mobilization will help governments craft policies to sever an important source of support to ISIS and could potentially reduce the impact of blowback attacks in Western countries in the years to come.[8]

C.   LITERATURE REVIEW: FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND ISLAMIST RADICALIZATION

A growing body of scholarship on the foreign fighter phenomenon and on Islamist radicalization in the west informs this study. Research on foreign fighters examines the methods and messages that organizations and recruiters use to *pull* foreign fighters into a

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[5] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (February 2013): 7.

[6] Bruce Hoffman, "The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism: Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (May-June, 2008): 138.

[7] Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 6–7.

[8] Daniel Byman, "The Homecomings: What Happens When Arab Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria Return*?" Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38, no. 8 (2015): 581–602.

cause. Other studies of jihadist movements and terrorism focus on the *push* factors of mobilization—what Thomas Hegghammer calls the "underlying determinants of supply" or "the attributes that make recruits inclined to join."[9] Scholars seeking to better understand radicalization examine how seemingly normal people adopt radical worldviews and become willing recruits for organizations like ISIS.[10] European academics examine the problems European states have integrating Muslim immigrants into the European community.[11] Finally, social movement theory provides the common lexicon and framework needed to analyze jihadist foreign fighter mobilization in Germany.[12]

1.   Foreign Fighter Recruiting

David Malet's research examines the foreign fighter phenomenon from the pull perspective—exploring how insurgencies have historically recruited fighters to their various causes. Malet places foreign fighter movements in their historical context and demonstrates that they are by no means exclusively Islamist phenomena. Indeed, at various times in history, large numbers of Protestant Christians, atheist communists, Zionist Jews, and others have traveled long distances (often against their governments' wishes) to join foreign insurgencies.

According to Malet, there is no evidence that Islamism has any extraordinary mobilizing power over these other historic identities.[13] Malet examines case studies from the Spanish Civil War, the Texas Revolution, the Israeli War for Independence, and 1980s Afghan insurgency to show how movements deliberately frame their messages to appeal to targeted identity groups in foreign countries. These messages, or *mobilizing*

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[9] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Recruiter's Dilemma: Signaling and Rebel Recruitment Tactics," *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 1, (2012): 4.

[10] Hafez and Mullins, "Radicalization Puzzle," 4–5.

[11] Thorsten Gerald Schneiders, *Salafismus in Deutschland: Ursprünge und Gefahren einer islamisch-fundamentalistischen Bewegung* [Salafism in Germany: Origins and Dangers of an Islamic-Fundamentalist Movement], (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript, 2014) 13–16.

[12] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 4.

[13] Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 205.

frames, have been remarkably similar over time and across conflicts—relying on a shared sense of "transnational identity" that binds foreign groups, such as the Muslim diaspora in Western Europe to threatened people groups in conflict zones, such as Syrian Sunnis.[14] Seeing their own transnational identity under threat inspires foreign fighters to become willing recruits. According to Malet, such transnational identities need not be religiously or ethnically based. Rather, "imagined communities that provide identity can be constructed on various bases."[15] Communist or republican foreign fighters in the Spanish Civil War are an example of an imagined community not based on religion.

Social movements use their messaging, or *mobilizing frames,* to build a common language that describes their purpose, outlines their strategy, and motivates their adherents.[16] Successful social movements consciously frame their targets, actions, and goals in common cultural or religious terms—both to create consensus among members and to spur them into action. In many Islamist social movements, successful frames not only describe what is wrong, assign blame, and outline the steps that must be taken, but they also include a religious obligation, or *fard-'ayn*, for all able-bodied Muslims to rise up in defense of the *ummah* (Muslim community).[17]

Other scholars who emphasize deliberate recruitment or pull factors include Bruce Hoffman, who argues that a strong and centralized leadership produces and directs recruitment efforts of global jihadist organizations like Al Qaeda. Referring to recruiting efforts in the United Kingdom, Hoffman argues that Al Qaeda launched "a longstanding campaign of subversion" in the late 1990s within the British Muslim community.[18] In this effort, Al Qaeda's recruiters could methodically "identify, indoctrinate, and exploit new recruits."[19] More recently, Hoffman has acknowledged that the global Al Qaeda

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[14] Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 23.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 19.

[17] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "Interests, Ideas, and Islamist Outreach in Egypt," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach,* ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 231–232.

[18] Hoffman, "Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism," 138.

[19] Ibid.

umbrella brand does promote self-radicalization and *lone wolf* attacks through its new media propaganda activities, but he treats these efforts as ancillary to the organization's core mission and as having only "limited success."[20] Core Al Qaeda leaders, Hoffman asserts, still launch targeted recruiting campaigns in support of the organizations' long-term strategy.[21] The rise of ISIS and their overwhelming success in recruiting foreign fighters in much greater numbers and in much less time than Al Qaeda makes the pull narrative more difficult to accept. Defenders of the pull conceptualization could argue that ISIS inherited both the recruitment strategies and possibly even the recruiting networks that Al Qaeda carefully cultivated over the last three decades—perhaps just in time to reap the rewards of Al Qaeda's lengthy efforts.

2.   Online Mobilization

Marc Sageman rejects the idea of dedicated jihadist recruiters infiltrating Western Muslim communities and preying on the ideologically impressionable. Instead, Sageman states that "after over a decade of intense search, there still has been no discovery of any single spotter/recruiter—except for FBI undercover agents."[22] Sageman argues that Al Qaeda's central leadership—decimated by the Global War on Terrorism—is no longer capable of leading such a large-scale organized recruitment effort even if such a strategy existed in the past. Sageman contends that the Internet plays a much larger role in the radicalization and mobilization of jihadists than traditional recruiting networks and that today's jihadists emerge from "small, local, self-organized groups" rather than some centralized recruiting plan.[23] According to Sageman, this "leaderless jihad" is adaptable and survivable because it is both flat and fragmented. Sageman writes, "the process of

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[20] Hoffman, "Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism," 138.

[21] Bruce Hoffman (2015) "A First Draft of the History of America's Ongoing Wars on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 1, (2015): 75–83.

[22] Marc Sageman "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research*," Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4, (2014), 567.

[23] Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 143.

radicalization is still going on but now proceeds in a hostile, post-9/11, wired environment, resulting in a social structure comprised of disconnected groups"[24]

The so-called Hoffman-Sageman debate highlights the difficulties involved in studying terrorist mobilization. Given Al Qaeda's strategic patience and long time-horizons, it is plausible that Al Qaeda recruiters were deliberately dispatched to infiltrate Muslim communities in the West and that some might still be out there radicalizing recruits to the cause. It is equally plausible, however, that global jihadist messaging has inspired some members of these communities to assign themselves the recruiting role that a deliberately planted recruiter might perform.

3.   Understanding Radicalization as a Complex Phenomenon

Scholars analyzing Islamist radicalization have spent the years since the attacks of September 11, 2001, eliminating a long list of radicalization hypotheses ranging from explaining the roots of Muslim hatred, exploring Muslim youth disenfranchisement, analyzing the lack of economic opportunities, and assessing the effect of relative deprivation.[25] Indeed, scholars now generally agree that there is no single identifiable profile for jihadists. The range of ethnic backgrounds, financial circumstances, religiosity, and education is far too broad to pin radicalizing potential on any one demographic. Likewise, scholars have rejected the theory of a particular "terrorist pathology" or psychological illness that causes ordinary people to seek out violent Islamist activism.[26] More recent scholarship has shifted to exploring how seemingly ordinary people abandon their previous value system and adopt an extremist worldview[27] According to Hafez and Mullins, conceptualizing radicalization as a "process" is misleading because it assumes a linear or step-by-step progression toward a radical worldview. While the relevant factors in radicalization—*grievances, networks,*

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[24] Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman, "Does Osama Still Call the Shots? Debating the Containment of al Qaeda's Leadership," *Foreign Affairs* 87 (2008): 163–166.

[25] Sageman "Stagnation in Terrorism Research*,"* 567.

[26] Ibid., 566.

[27] Hafez and Mullins, "Radicalization Puzzle," 4–5.

ideologies, and *supporting structures*—exist in nearly every case, the order and relative importance of each factor varies from person to person.[28]

4. Jihadist Radicalization in Europe: An Integration Deficit?

Unlike the United States, Western European nations present a different context for radicalization due to Europe's long history of attracting workers from Muslim countries such as Turkey. Therefore, one potential explanation for jihadist radicalization in Europe is to blame Europe's poor record integrating their migrant populations with the rest of society. Compared to migrant communities in the United States and Canada, immigrant groups in Europe are generally more economically depressed and less integrated into their new societies.[29] Germany's Turkish population exemplifies this integration deficit.

Of Germany's 4.3 million Muslims, more than half (2.5–2.6 million) are of Turkish origin. Waves of Turkish migrant workers began arriving in Germany in the 1960s when German industrial expansion outpaced the domestic labor supply. From 1955 through 1968, the German government negotiated guest-worker agreements, *"Anwerbeverträge,"* with several foreign governments including Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia.[30] Under the terms of the agreements, workers were supposed to return to their home countries eventually. After living and working in Germany for many years, however, millions of them opted to stay. Over the following decades, many of these migrant workers brought their family members to settle in Germany more or less permanently. Despite this long history of migration, German Turks today remain the least integrated community in Germany. Turks are underrepresented in German universities, suffer higher than national average unemployment, and over 16% of Turkish children in Germany fail to complete high school.[31]

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[28] Hafez and Mullins, "Radicalization Puzzle," 28.

[29] Christian Joppke "Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 30, no. 1 (2007): 4.

[30] Frank Horst, "Salafist Jihadism in Germany," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) Report*, 6–7. https://www.ict.org.il/Article/729/Salafist%20Jihadism%20in%20Germany.

[31] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Rabasa and Benard reject the integration deficit as a cause the recent rise of jihadist ideology in Europe. They argue that the least integrated first-generation Muslim immigrants rarely become jihadists. On the contrary, many of those who have turned to jihadist violence were those who appeared to be comparatively well integrated in European society. While the integration deficit is real and a source of grievance, Rabasa and Benard argue that the "grievances that propel radicalization and violence are largely vicarious in nature. The motivating factors need not be, and often are not, part of the personal experience of the individual."[32] Finally, Rabasa and Benard reject the Internet as a major factor in radicalizing European jihadists, arguing "the transition from radicalization to terrorism almost always takes place in face-to-face encounters and very seldom on the Internet."[33]

5.   Choosing between Fighting Abroad and Terrorism at Home

Thomas Hegghammer explores how radicalized Western jihadists choose between becoming foreign fighters and domestic terrorists. Hegghammer argues that most Western jihadists would prefer to travel oversees to engage in foreign jihad because they see fighting in a defensive jihad in the Middle East as more legitimate than conducting attacks in the West.[34] While there is tremendous diversity of opinions among Sunni Islamist scholars, the consensus view among them is, Hegghammer writes, "that fighting in established conflict zones is more legitimate than attacks in the West."[35] To explain the continued incidences of domestic terrorism, given this preference for foreign fighting, Hegghammer provides two hypotheses. First, jihadist fighters may travel abroad to train only to be coopted by a terrorist group with ambitions for operations in the West. Once in the camp, these jihadists are persuaded they can best serve the cause by returning to the West to conduct attacks there. Either because of loyalty to the new group, or because they have few alternative options, these jihadists accept this less-preferred form of activism.

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[32] Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 193.

[33] Rabasa and Benard, *Eurojihad,* 192–193.

[34] Hegghammer, "Should I Stay," 7.

[35] Ibid.

Hegghammer lists the 9/11 Hamburg Cell and the 2009 New York City subway plotters as notable examples of jihadists who set out to be foreign fighters but were subsequently diverted by Al Qaeda to conduct attacks in the West. The second reason why intended foreign fighters become domestic terrorists is that their preferences gradually change due to their combat experience abroad. In this case, "the recruit arrives in the conflict zone, takes part in combat, and comes to see theological arguments constraining violence as impractical or naïve."[36] The veteran jihadist thus returns to the West accustomed to violence and no longer seeing constrained by thoughts of jihad at home being somehow less legitimate. Under either of the above scenarios, Hegghammer argues why Western governments are right to be concerned about the numbers of foreign fighters traveling to Syria and Iraq.

6.   A Social Movement Theory Lexicon

Given the diversity of opinions among scholars, the interdisciplinary body of theory on social movements will provide a useful lexicon for discussing the foreign fighter phenomenon in this analysis. Indeed, many of the concepts already introduced in this chapter, such as grievances, networks, mobilizing frames, and supporting structures, draw directly from social movement theory. Though originally developed to explain the complex dynamics of mass protest and mass mobilization, social movement theory has much to offer the study of jihadist foreign fighters. Like protest movements, transnational jihad is a form of contentious politics, involving both substantial risk and personal inconvenience for the fighter. Explaining what makes a person take such risks is one of the aims of social movement theory. Also like protest movements, transnational jihad movements defy simple explanation. Social movement theory incorporates historical, psychological, religious, political, and economic explanations of complex events and fuses multiple disciplines into a "comprehensive, interconnected understanding" of mobilization events.[37] Expressed another way, psychologists seek to understand the grievances and personal motivations of foreign fighters, religious scholars try to

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[36] Hegghammer, "Should I Stay," 10.

[37] Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism," 4.

understand the Islamic underpinnings to transnational jihad, and historians try to identify the origins of the Jihadi Salafi thought: social movement theory provides a framework for incorporating all three. Social movement theory provides three additional concepts that are particularly relevant to foreign fighter mobilization: *anchoring*, *personal networks,* and *bloc mobilization.*

a.　Anchoring

Anchoring is a practical concept describing a level of personal time commitment to family and work that prohibits increasing mobilization in social movements. According to social movement theory, less anchored people—those who are young unemployed and single—have much higher levels of what Doug McAdam calls "biographical availability" and are freer to participate more fully in social movements.[38]

While many people may be sympathetic to a movement's ideology or mobilizing frame and many may be invited to join, not everyone who is invited ultimately joins. The difference between those who join a movement and those who remain on the sidelines is often the degree to which previous relationship and time commitments act as "countervailing influences."[39] These countervailing influences (called anchoring factors here) include age, employment, marriage, and children.[40] Finally, social movement scholars have argued that biographical availability changes the cost calculation of higher risk forms of activism: the unemployed student who travels abroad for a jihadist cause pays a lower cost for that activism than the fully employed father or mother with young children at home.[41]

[38] Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer," *American Journal of Sociology* 92, (1986): 64–90.

[39] David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher, and Sheldon Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment," *American Sociological Review* 45, no. 5 (1980): 787–801. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2094895.

[40] McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism," 70.

[41] Ibid.

More recent scholarship has called the original anchoring hypotheses into question, however.[42] Beyerlein and Hipp, for example, argue that biographical unavailability only reduces activism in the initial stage of a mobilization process. Once someone is already committed to a movement, according to Beyerlein and Hipp, biographical unavailability has no effect on a person's willingness to move into higher risk forms of activism.[43]

b. Personal Networks

Social movement theorists generally accept that personal networks are highly important for mobilization. Numerous social movement studies show that the act of being personally invited to join a movement by a friend already in the movement is one of the more powerful mobilizing factors. According to Donatella della Porta, "social movements recruit in dense social networks and, more particularly, among individuals who are already members of preexisting formal and informal groups."[44] Preexisting networks are fertile ground for mobilization because they bring together like-minded individuals, promote peer-pressure and groupthink, provide a safe haven for gradual radicalization, and reduce the risks that recruiting efforts will be discovered by local authorities. In his study on suicide bombers in the early 2000s, Mohammed Hafez finds personal networks were critical to the mobilization and recruitment of jihadists willing to die in the Iraqi insurgency.[45]

c. Bloc Recruitment

Finally, Della Porta, Hafez, and others also introduce the concept of bloc recruitment—in which a few members of a close-knit group increase their commitment to

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[42] Sharon Nepstad and Christian Smith, "Rethinking Recruitment to High-risk/cost Activism: The Case of Nicaragua Exchange," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1999): 25–40.

[43] Kraig Beyerlein and John Hipp, "A Two-stage Model for a Two-stage Process: How Biographical Availability Matters for Social Movement Mobilization," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2006): 299–300.

[44] Donatella Della Porta, "Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations," in *International Social Movement Research* vol. 4, (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992), 6.

[45] Ibid., 23.

a movement and persuade the rest of their friends to follow suit.[46] Hafez cites one example wherein several players of a Saudi semi-professional soccer team mobilized as a group to travel and fight in Iraq.[47] Yet the Saudi soccer squad is not the only example of bloc mobilization in the Iraqi insurgency: the Sinjar records (a trove of ISIS data captured by U.S. forces near Sinjar, Iraq, in 2007) confirmed that nearly half of the 202 foreign fighters reaching Iraq arrived on the same day as someone else from their hometown.[48]

D.   POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature, four hypotheses emerge to help explain how and why *German* foreign fighters mobilized for to fight in the Syrian Civil War.

1.   H1: German Foreign Fighters Are Mobilized Primarily Through Traditional Social Networks.

While some academics and government officials voice concerns about a rising trend of "leaderless jihad," social movement theory holds that traditional social networks are far more important than strictly online connections for radicalizing and mobilizing foreign fighters. Investigating this hypothesis may also reveal the role of recruiters in mobilizing German foreign fighters. To test this hypothesis, this study will examine to what extent German foreign fighters were connected to one another and to their recruiters prior to mobilizing. If traditional social networks are a primary mobilizing force, then there should be evidence of geographic clustering and preexisting personal network connections among German foreign fighters that predates their mobilization and travel to the combat area. Finally, in-network mobilization would predict high levels of bloc mobilization—fighters traveling to Syria in groups instead of traveling alone.

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[46] Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movement, Political Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 168.

[47] Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 23.

[48] Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records," Combating Terrorism Center Report (2007): 23. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaidas-foreign-fighters-in-iraq-a-first-look-at-the-sinjar-records.

2. H2: Social Media Has Replaced Traditional Social Networks in Mobilizing German Foreign Fighters

As previously indicated, this proposition is debated among scholars. Indeed, anecdotal evidence shows that at least some foreign fighters are radicalized and mobilized exclusively through online and social media interactions. Recent cases of lone-wolf radicalization and attacks in the West have captured international headlines and reignited concerns over online social networks recruiting new waves of jihadists from virtually anywhere. As societies change and social interactions happen increasingly in the virtual world instead of in the physical one, this hypothesis certainly demands attention. This hypothesis seeks to empirically test the power of online social media in radicalizing and mobilizing German foreign fighters. If the concerns captured in this second hypothesis are correct and more fighters are indeed being radicalized over the Internet, then data on German fighters should show less interpersonal connections among fighters before mobilization. If the Internet is a primary channel for radicalization, then cases of radicalization should also be geographically dispersed and evenly distributed across the country.

3. H3: Integrated Muslims in Germany Are Less Likely to Become Foreign Fighters

The third hypothesis will test Rabasa and Benard's findings about the effect of the "integration deficit" on the radicalization of Muslim immigrants in Germany radicalization and mobilization as a foreign fighter. Evidence supporting this hypothesis should show that foreign fighters are primarily immigrants who have not integrated well into German society and possess strong social ties to countries outside Germany. The number of native-German converts joining jihadist organizations would also be expected to be low.

4. H4: Unanchored Members of German Society Are More Likely to Become Foreign Fighters

The final hypothesis will use empirical evidence to test the claim that less anchored individuals are more susceptible to mobilization. Under this hypothesis, anchoring factors such as career, education, marriage, romantic relationships, and

children will be examined to determine if these factors decrease the likelihood of foreign fighting.

It is possible that more than one of the above hypotheses will combine to explain German foreign fighter mobilization. Alternately, it is that none of the above hypotheses sufficiently explain the reasons why Germans become foreign fighters.

E.   RESEARCH DESIGN AND THESIS OVERVIEW

This study is part of a team effort led by Professor Mohammed M. Hafez at the Naval Postgraduate School in California. Its aim is to build a searchable scholarly database of Islamist foreign fighters. Other contributors to this effort are currently building profiles on fighters from Great Britain and Italy. This country-focused effort is designed to divide the difficult work of gathering biographical data on foreign fighters in open unclassified sources. It is also intended to reveal any country-to-country variances in how foreign fighters are mobilized. It is organized in the following way:

Chapter II will gather and analyze information on the jihadist foreign fighters from recently published German academic and government sources. This is intended to present the official and public German understanding of the phenomenon as well as German governmental responses up to mid-2015. The chapter draws heavily from two recently released German security service reports on German residents who have traveled to fight in Syria between 2011 and 2014. The first document contains background data on 378 German fighters known to have departed Germany for Syria by the end of June 2014. It appeared in December 2014.[49] The second report, released in June of 2015, focuses on

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[49] Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution], *Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind* [Analysis of the information available to German security authorities about the radicalization process of persons who have traveled to Syria under Islamist motivations], (Cologne, Germany: 2014). http://www.innenministerkonferenz .de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/14-12-11_12/anlage-analyse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

just 60 fighters from Berlin and its surrounding suburbs.[50] The reports are published online, but have so far only been partially translated into English. While these German government reports provide a level of detail usually not found in open sources, they are finalized products. They are not searchable and researchers cannot interact with the source data.

Chapter III presents new research on this topic at the micro level. It compiles detailed dossiers on 99 German foreign fighters who have traveled (or attempted to travel) to the current conflict in Syria and Iraq. It then provides analysis of the recruits according to social mobilization and radicalization theories described above. The profiles are based entirely on unclassified and open sources—mostly obtained from German news media reporting. For each of the 99 profiles, all publicly available information was collected for the following categories:

1. Name

2. Age (at departure from Germany)

3. Gender

4. Country of origin (if immigration background)

5. Immigration background (1st, 2nd, 3rd generation)

6. Conversion status

7. Education level

8. Occupation & economic status

9. Level of anchoring (Children, Marriage, romantic relationship)

10. History of activism prior to mobilization

11. History of criminality prior to mobilization

12. Social ties with other foreign fighters prior to mobilization

13. Network connections to recruiters prior to mobilization

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[50] Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport—Berlin [Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sports], *Ausreisen von Personen aus dem islamistischen Spektrum in Berlin nach Syrien/Irak* [Foreign Travel of Persons from the Islamist Spectrum in Berlin to Syria and Iraq], (Berlin, Germany: 2015), 1–24. https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/lage-und-wahlanalysen/.

14. Network connections to Salafist scene prior to mobilization

15. Group or individual recruitment

16. Group or individual travel to combat zone

17. Role: fighter, recruiter, bride, or multiple

18. Ideological motivation

19. Transit route to combat zone

20. Group joined in combat zone (ISIS, AQ, etc.)

21. Mode of death

22. German city of residence prior to/during mobilization

23. Last known location

By analyzing this biographical, background, and social network connection data, this thesis will reveal additional details that the German official reports have omitted or missed.

While the biographical and background data (age, immigration background, gender, etc.) is aggregated and presented statistically, the social network data (social ties prior to mobilization) is imported into the visual analytics program, *Palantir,* for further analysis. Originally developed for the Central Intelligence Agency, Palantir allows enormous quantities of social network data to be analyzed visually—revealing link and social network connections that traditional analysis methods cannot. The link analysis performed using Palantir will reveal to what extent the German foreign fighters were mobilized within preexisting networks.

After examining the social network connections of the 99 profiled German fighters, Chapter III will continue with an analysis of their anchoring and integration into German society. Finally, Chapter IV will revisit the proposed hypotheses and draw conclusions based on the data revealed throughout the study.

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II.   GERMAN DATA ON FOREIGN FIGHTERS

A.   INTRODUCTION

In late January of 2014, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) social media feeds began to boast that 26-year-old Robert Baum, known to his fellow fighters as "Uthman al-Almani," had blown himself up in the Syrian village of al Kafat—allegedly taking 50 "unbelievers" with him to his death.[51] When the news reached Robert's hometown of Solingen—a midsize town on the edge of Germany's industrial heartland—it prompted a series of now familiar questions: Why did this "shy, introverted boy" end his own life murdering strangers in a faraway land? How does a young German convert to Islam become a radicalized jihadist foreign fighter in the span of just a few years? Finally, why are increasing numbers of Germans like Baum suddenly leaving relatively comfortable lives to fight, and often die, for organizations like ISIS?[52]

By the time of Baum's death, the German government had grown increasingly concerned about the rapid increase in the number of Germans traveling to fight in Syria. While small groups of German fighters participated in jihadist movements since the 1980s, the scale mobilization for the Syrian conflict was unprecedented. By the beginning of 2014, over 300 Germans had joined the fighting in Syria's civil war—eclipsing all previous German Islamist foreign fighter movements in less than two years.

B.   GERMAN GOVERNMENT ASSESSMENT

In response to this sharp increase in foreign fighter mobilization, the German Interior Ministry Conference, held December 4–6, 2013, commissioned an interagency working group between the German Joint Counterterrorism Center (GTAZ) and the Bundesamt für *Verfassungsschutz*—Germany's domestic intelligence service—to determine "who has departed Germany for Syria so far and to diagnose which factors

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[51] Jörg Diehl, Hubert Gude, Julia Jüttner, Christoph Reuter, Fidelius Schmid, and Holger Stark, "Mach Dir Keine Sorgen" [Do Not Worry Yourself], *Der Spiegel* June, 2014, http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-124838643.html.

[52] Ibid.

influenced their radicalization before departure."[53] The ensuing report was entitled "Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind," (Analysis of the information available to German security authorities about the radicalization-backgrounds and -processes of persons who have traveled toward Syria under Islamist motivations). The report, hereafter cited as the *Verfassungsschutz* report, was published on December 1, 2014 and includes data on 378 people "known to German security authorities to have departed Germany towards Syria before the end of June 2014."[54]

Following the release of the federal-level *Verfassungsschutz* report, several German state-level security services also released their own reports on the foreign fighter issue. While the national-level report *ipso facto* incorporated much of the state-level data, the state-level reports presented findings in a way that occasionally adds clarity. For example, the federal *Verfassungsschutz* report did not reveal the ethnic backgrounds of the German foreign fighters—providing citizenship data instead. The state report from Berlin's security service on the other hand, provides "migration background" numbers on all 60 of its subjects—thus giving additional insight into important questions of integration and migration status of German foreign fighters.[55]

The state-level report from Berlin was published in June of 2015—six months after the federal *Verfassungsschutz* report was released. By the time the Berlin report was published, the total number of foreign fighters who had departed from Germany had increased to 680—nearly doubling in the year since the information cutoff date for the federal report. The Berlin report incorporated data on 60 foreign fighters who left Berlin between the middle of 2012 and the spring of 2015.[56] The following paragraphs present an analysis of both sets of reports.

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[53] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 3.

[54] Ibid., 3–5.

[55] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Ausreisen,* 10.

[56] Ibid., 1–2.

Germany's decision to release a large dataset on foreign fighters is both rare and welcome. One of the more difficult aspects of conducting academic research on transnational foreign fighters is that governments and intelligence services usually have the best data on individual participants, and most governments are loath to share such information with the academic community.[57] This shortage of empirical data has troubled academics and has led some scholars to start building their own databases based on open-source information gleaned from traditional and social media as well as from ISIS propaganda. Hafez, Hegghammer, and Sageman are each involved in such projects. Academic databases on foreign fighters are gradually allowing these scholars to collaborate to better understand the phenomenon, but it is doubtful that any such academic effort will rival the data-collection capacity of state-funded intelligence services anytime soon.

The purpose of this chapter is to apply German government data to this project's analysis of the German foreign fighter phenomenon. This chapter will first present basic background and demographic data from the German reports. Next, this chapter will analyze the German government data in terms of what it reveals about *networks*, *anchoring*, and *integration into German society*. Conclusions from this chapter will inform the subsequent analysis of the collected foreign fighter profiles in chapter three. Throughout, this chapter will evaluate how the German findings comport with current scholarly consensus on social mobilization and radicalization theory.

C.   BASIC DATA

Anonymized data for the federal *Verfassungsschutz* report was collected from state and local police agencies and analyzed over a four-month period between March and July of 2014. In the process, German security services encountered considerable case-to-case variance in information availability for departed fighters. While the study lists the frequency distribution and average values relative to the entire study group (n=378), there are several variables for which the German security services had incomplete information. For those variables, the study identified the number of cases with

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[57] Sageman, "Stagation in Terrorism Research," 572.

known values. Statistics pulled from the German federal report in this chapter will be provided with n=378, unless otherwise indicated. In the Berlin report (which also provides more complete picture of its 60 subjects), the statistical information is given with n=60.

The following section is a translated and summarized version of the basic demographic data of fighters in the two German government studies. This section provides the demographic data on the German foreign fighter contingent traveling to Syria before June 2014 and sets the stage for further analysis

1. Gender

Of the federal *Verfassungsschutz* study group of 378 travelers, 335 (89%) were male and 42 (11%) were female. Only one traveler's gender was unknown at the time of publication. The Berlin report counted 47 men (78%) and 13 women (22%).[58]

2. Urban vs. Rural

Approximately 90% of the travelers lived in urban areas of Germany, while 10% lived in areas described as rural.

3. Age

The report established an average age of German travelers at 26.5 years. The youngest traveler was 15 and the oldest 62. Figure 1 offers an age breakout showing that a substantial majority of subjects were between 19 and 30 years of age.

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[58] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Ausreisen,* 7.

Figure 1.   Age at Departure

Adapted and translated from Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution], *Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind* [Analysis of the information available to German security authorities about the radicalization process of persons who have traveled to Syria under Islamist motivations], (Cologne, Germany: 2014). http://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/14-12-11_12/anlage-analyse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

4.   Discussion

The average age of the German fighters is consistent with other recent data on jihadist mobilizations. For example, the Sinjar records of Al Qaeda recruits arriving in Iraq in 2006–7 show that the average age of arriving fighters was 24–25 years (slightly younger than the average age of German traveler in this study).[59] That young men would comprise the largest demographic in a violent foreign conflict is not particularly surprising; that this group of jihadists would be accompanied by such a large cohort of women, however, is unexpected.

Women have not historically joined foreign fighter movements in such large numbers. In the largest historic example of female foreign fighter participation—the Spanish Civil War, where 54 American women joined 2800 of their male compatriots in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades—women still only constituted a small minority of

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[59] Felter and Fishman, "Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq," 16.

participants (0.5%).[60] Moreover, even among radical Islamists, fighting in jihad has rarely been seen as an acceptable female role in any but the most extreme circumstances.[61] While Al Qaeda's ideologues have come to regard female Palestinian suicide bombers and Chechnyan "Black Widows" as legitimate local expressions of defensive jihad, most have stopped short of calling on women to mobilize to fight in foreign countries.[62]

With women now constituting more than one-in-ten German foreign fighters in the combat area, it seems clear that the traditional gender mix of jihadist foreign fighters has changed. ISIS propaganda efforts now call on Western women to travel to the caliphate, either in the company their husbands or in order to marry fighters who are already there. At the same time, German news reports warn of female ISIS recruiters who actively target young German girls and smuggle them away to Syria. Current estimates hold that approximately 550 Western women have already answered that call and are now in the conflict area.[63]

Bekker and de Leede find that most Western women in the Syrian conflict do not participate in direct combat. Instead, these women support their causes indirectly by spreading propaganda, nursing wounded fighters, and raising their children in the Salafist/jihadist ideology.[64] Finally, having more marriageable girls in a jihadist organization like ISIS may also play a role in attracting male recruits. Ebrahim B., a 26 year-old German foreign fighter from the town of Wolfsburg who returned from Syria disillusioned in 2014, summarizes how sex and fast cars were part of the recruiting pitch. In a 2015 television interview, Ebriham said, "For example, in Syria, you can drive the most expensive cars that you could not even afford in Europe. You would like to build a family and marry? In Germany or in Europe everything is expensive. There you can

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[60] Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 103.

[61] David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (2005): 375.

[62] Ibid., 382.

[63] Edwin Bakker and Seran de Leede, "European Female Jihadists in Syria: Exploring and Under Researched Topic," International Centre for Counter-Terrorism The Hague, ICCT Background Note, April 2015, 3.

[64] Ibid., 9–10.

marry … from an Islamic perspective, marry four women! Who wouldn't want to have four women, to be honest?"[65] There must have been some disparity between the promises and reality, however, because he returned, disillusioned.

D.   NETWORKS

As studies of social movements have shown, Islamist organizations frequently recruit and radicalize new members within pre-existing networks. Such networks, Wickham writes, provide safety for radicalizing individuals where they can "'try out' different levels and forms of participation, without initiating a break from their social circles."[66] According to German academic and government experts, the German "Salafist scene" has grown into a nationwide network that not only attracts new converts into an extremely fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, but also fills the role of a radicalizing milieu wherein members can experiment with different levels of Islamist activism. Since the German federal-level report identifies 99% of the departed foreign fighters (319 of 323 cases) as Salafists, it is necessary to briefly describe how this Salafist scene fits into to the broader phenomenon of *Salafi Islam* in Germany.

1.   Salafism in Germany

Among a population of 80 million Germans, approximately 4.6 million identify themselves as Muslims. Fewer than 8,000 of these adhere to the fundamentalist Salafi interpretation of Islam.[67] Among these Salafi Muslims, German scholars identify three ideological subgroupings. The first group consists of purist or "quietist" Salafis who focus on setting themselves apart to live according to the tenets and practices of the first three generations of Muslims, the *salaf al-salih*.[68] Salafis place a heavy emphasis on the

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[65] Britta von der Heide, Christian Baars, Georg Mascolo, Stephan Wels, and Christian Deker, "Von Wolsfburg in den Dchihad" [From Wolfsburg to Jihad] Norddeutscher Rundfunk [North German Broadcasting], July 16, 2015. http://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/niedersachsen/braunschweig_harz_goettingen/Von-Wolfsburg-in-Dschihad,dschihad136.html#page=0&anim=slide.

[66] Wickham, "Interests, Ideas, and Islamist Outreach in Egypt," 232.

[67] "Salafistische Bestrebungen: Inhalte und Ziele salafistischer Ideologie" [Salafist Aspirations: Content and Goals of Salafist Ideology], German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution website, accessed March 23, 2016, https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/ arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/was-ist-islamismus/salafistische-bestrebungen.

[68] Schneiders, *Salafismus in Deutschland,* 14.

Qur'an and the *Sunna* (the life and example of the Prophet).[69] Salafis are generally critical of the innovations (*bid'a*) of the traditional schools of Islam, as such innovation emerged after the first three generations.[70]

Political or activist Salafists—with the added *-ist* suffix—comprise the second (and by far the largest) Salafi subgroup in Germany. These political Salafists adhere to the same fundamentalist ideology as their quietist coreligionists, but also have the political objective of transforming German society to match their ideology. Political Salafists in Germany emphasize *dawa* (inviting non-believers as well as other Muslims into the faith) and are active within Germany's political system.[71] According to Steinberg, political Salafists "show a marked ambivalence toward violence, often displaying sympathy for militant groups fighting for the liberation of what they consider to be occupied Muslim territory in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan."[72]

The final subgroup of Salafis in Germany consists of jihadist Salafists. This group takes the activism of the political Salafists and adds violence. Jihadist Salafists are willing to engage in violence to achieve their political and ideological objectives. They accept the framework that the *umma* is under attack from outside forces and they actively call on Muslims to engage in combat against those they deem responsible for this assault.[73]

Of the three Salafi subgroups in Germany, the political Salafist subgroup is both the largest and fastest growing. German domestic intelligence services estimate that 90% of the Salafis in Germany belong to this activist subgroup, with the quietist Salafis and jihadist Salafists occupying marginal positions on opposite ends of the spectrum.[74] What

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[69] Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam,* 2nd ed. (Walden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 151–153.

[70] Jacob Olidort, "The Politics of 'Quietist' Salafism," Brookings Institute Paper, February 2015, 7, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2015/02/salafism-quietist-politics-olidort/brookings-analysis-paper_jacob-olidort-inside_final_web.pdf.

[71] Schneiders, *Salafismus in Deutschland,* 14.

[72] Guido Steinberg, *German Jihad*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 127.

[73] Ibid.*,* 128.

[74] Schneiders, *Salafismus in Deutschland,* 20.

worries German authorities most about political Salafists, however, is the apparent ease with which members of this group graduate to more radical forms of activism. According to a government report from the German state of North-Rheine Westphalia, "the transition between the 'political' and the 'jihadist' Salafist is fluid."[75] Finally, it is the political Salafist subgroup that dominates what German authorities call the *Salafist scene*.

Salafist scene is an umbrella term used to describe the missionary work, preaching, Internet outreach, and visible presence of political Salafists in German cities and towns. Activities the German government considers part of the *scene* include Islam seminars, Qur'an distribution, Salafist mosques and benefit events raising funds for Salafist causes (most commonly in areas of the world where Salafists perceive Muslim groups to be under threat or suffering). Spiritual and charismatic leadership of the scene comes from several popular Salafist preachers, including Hassan Dabbagh, Ibrahim Abou Nagie, Pierre Vogel, and Sven Lau. While earlier Salafist preachers in Germany targeted mostly Arab Muslim immigrant groups and preached in Arabic, these new Salafist preachers present their *Dawa* in German to anyone who will listen—generating a wide following among second- and third-generation immigrants as well native-German followers.[76]

2. Radicalization within the Salafist Scene

The federal *Verfassungsschutz* report on foreign fighters states that Salafist scene "had an obvious radicalizing influence at the beginning of the radicalizations process for over two thirds of the cases."[77] Moreover, German investigators found that the percentage of the foreign fighters with ties to the scene increased to 79% in the "later

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[75] Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen [Ministry for Interior and Local Affairs of the State of North Rheine Westphalia], *Verfassungsschutzbericht für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen für das Jahr 2014* [State Office for the Protection of the Constitution Report for the Year 2014], (Düsseldorf, Germany: Verfassungsschutz Nordrhein-Westfalen), 263. http://www.mik.nrw.de/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/berichte.html

[76] Nina Wiedl and Carmen Becker, "Populäre Prediger im deutschen Salafismus" [Popular Preachers in German Salafism], in Schneiders ed. *Salafismus in Deutschland*, 187–215.

[77] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 13.

stages of the radicalization. Finally, the report states that 167 of the travelers had ties to "well-known Salafists" before their departure to Syria.[78]

Instead of directly examining personal network connections between individual foreign fighters, however, German investigators measured the fighters' connection to the Salafist scene by searching for evidence of their participation in the scene's various activities before radicalizing and before departing Germany. The scene activities investigated include, participation with Qur'an distribution campaigns, attending "Islam seminars," attending benefits organized by Salafist groups, and attending known Salafist mosques. The federal study singled out Ibrahim Abou Nagie's *"Lies!"* organization by name as a specific indicator of scene membership. *"Lies"* is the German imperative form of the word "read" and is a reference to the first word spoken to the Prophet Mohammed by God in the Qur'an.[79]

The federal *Verfassungsschutz* report found that 160 out of 221 foreign fighters (72%) had connections to the Salafist scene prior to their radicalization. The report lists the following connections to Salafist scene activities: 64 were active with the *"Lies!"* campaign, 55 had attended Salafist Islamic seminars, 24 had attended benefits organized by Salafist groups, and 88 had contact to known Salafist mosques. Repeat or multiple connections were possible. For example, a single person could have been known to distribute Qur'an's with *"Lies!"* and to attend Salafist mosques. The German study repeated the same query for Salafist scene involvement after the radicalization process had begun and found that 187 of 235, or 79% of travelers were influenced by their connections to the Salafist scene "during the further course of radicalization."[80]

Family and friend connections followed Salafist scene connections in significance for pre-and post-radicalization, but also had considerable overlap with Salafist scene factors. 128 of the 221 travelers for whom pre-mobilization data was available had family, friend, or school connections to Salafist networks. However, 85% of this group

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[78]Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 13.

[79] Qur'an 96:1

[80] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 14.

was simultaneously involved in the German Salafist scene. This left only 35 persons who radicalized through family, friend, or school connections without also participating in the Salafist milieu. The post-radicalization story is similar: The number of individuals influenced exclusively by family, friend, or school connections without known scene involvement drops to 13% in the post-radicalization data.[81]

3. Online Radicalization vs. Traditional Social Networks

Anecdotal evidence supports the case that at least some jihadists are radicalized and mobilized exclusively through online and social-media interactions. The case of 21-year-old German Kosovar, Arid Uka, is one such example. On March 2, 2011, Uka opened fire on a bus full of U.S. Air Force personnel at Frankfurt International Airport—killing two Airmen. Subsequent investigations found that Uka had radicalized exclusively over the Internet with no known face-to-face contact to other jihadists.[82] While stories like Uka's draw headlines and frighten governments, most scholars do not consider them major contributors to radicalization. According to Rabasa and Benard, "the transition from radicalization to terrorism almost always takes place in face-to-face encounters and very seldom on the Internet."[83]

Data from the German studies strongly support the scholarly consensus regarding online radicalization. The Internet was identified as an "influential radicalization factor" in 67 cases during the pre-radicalization phase. However, of these 67, only 13 were not also connected to either the Salafist scene, and/or did not have family, friend or school connections to Salafist networks. Thus, only 6% of the pre-radicalization cases were identified as being exclusively influenced by the Internet in the early stages of radicalization. During the later phases of radicalization the number of online-only cases drops to just 3%.[84] Thus, while Internet radicalization captures headlines, the overwhelming empirical evidence shows that it is not a significant mobilization factor.

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[81] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 14–15.

[82] Steinberg, *German Jihad,* 3–5.

[83] Rabasa and Benard, *Eurojihad,* 192–193.

[84] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 14–15.

4.   Bloc Mobilization

One of the most significant results of the German studies was strong evidence of bloc mobilization. As discussed in Chapter I, bloc mobilization describes a group of several volunteers or recruits from the same social circle join a movement together. When one or two members of a tight-knit peer group join a radical movement or commit to a higher-risk form of activism, peer pressure and a desire to conform will often induce other members of the group to follow suit.[85]

The German *Verfassungsschutz* study showed that 140 out of 263 travelers departed Germany with friends. A further 69 (18%) traveled to Syria with family members. Only 54 of the travelers (14%) were identified as having departed alone. The combined number known to have traveled in groups of friends or family is 209 out of 263, or 79%. The report did not have any data on whether the remaining 116 foreign fighters traveled alone or in groups; however, even if all of these 116 unknown cases traveled alone, the group-travelers would still constitute over 55% of the total German foreign fighter contingent. Moreover, a large number of the Berlin study (35%) traveled to Syria or Iraq with some combination of spouses and children.

E.   INTEGRATION IN GERMAN SOCIETY

The German government studies provide some clues about the relative integration of foreign fighters in German society. Many have suggested that that the poor economic and cultural integration of migrant groups in Germany has led to an increase in anger among young Muslim immigrants. They contend that the relegation of many of these migrants to communities in inner-city ghettos has made these locations prime targets for recruitment.[86] While no precise metric for societal integration exists, data on ethnicity, migrations background, citizenship, criminality, conversion status, and previous jihadist experience all provide indications of the level to which German foreign fighters were integrated into German society.

[85] Hafez and Mullins, "Radicalization Puzzle," 15–16.

[86] Robert S. Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 4 (Jul, 2005) 120–135; Timothy Savage, "Europe and Islam," *Washington Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (2004): 25–50.

1. Ethnicity and Migrations Background

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the federal *Verfassungsschutz* report is short on information about the ethnic makeup of the German foreign fighters. From the report, we learn that 229 of the travelers were born in Germany (61%). This number includes both those of German ancestry as well as those born into migrant families. The remaining 39% of travelers were first-generation immigrants. The federal *Verfassungsschutz* report does, however, reveal the birth nations of these first-generation immigrants—indicating the ethnic origins of at least some of the fighters. Of the first-generation immigrants in the federal study, significant groupings included 31 Syrians (8%), 24 Turks (6%), 12 Lebanese, and 12 Russians (3% each).

Meanwhile, the Berlin study uses the term "migrations background" to address the question of ethnicity. Of the 60 travelers from Berlin, only 16 were without migrations backgrounds and can be assumed to be of German ancestry. The remaining travelers' migrations backgrounds from the Berlin study are reflected in Figure 2. Here we see that the majority of foreign fighters had a migration history from politically unstable regions with significant Muslim populations. While these migrants (or their parents) might have left their homelands for economic or political reasons, they were attracted back as jihadists.

Figure 2.   Migrations Background of Fighters from Berlin
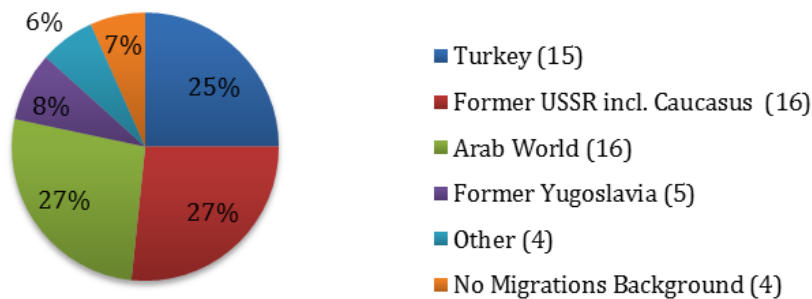
Adapted and translated from Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport—Berlin [Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sports], *Ausreisen von Personen aus dem islamistischen Spektrum in Berlin nach Syrien/Irak* [Foreign Travel of Persons from the Islamist Spectrum in Berlin to Syria and Iraq], (Berlin, Germany: 2015), 1–24. https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/lage-und-wahlanalysen/.

Another factor related to integration examined in the federal *Verfassungsschutz* report is the age at which the foreign fighter originally immigrated into Germany. An immigrant arriving in Germany as a young child would be more likely to have mastered the German language, have German friends and benefited from Germany's education system—providing a first approximation of the extent to which they might feel integrated into German society. The *Verfassungsschutz* report reveals the age-at-immigration for 82 of the foreign-born travelers. Of this group, 25 arrived in Germany as children under 14 years of age, 27 arrived as adolescents between the ages of 14–21, and 30 immigrated to Germany as adults (over 21). This limited data set might suggest that age of migration was not a significant factor at all, yet it is probably too small to be significant.

2.   Citizenship

Another potential measure of integration is citizenship. While citizenship does not always relate to feelings of integration, Rabasa and Benard find that Germans with a migration background who have German citizenship do score better on other measures of integration including education and employment.[87] Yet according to the German *Verfassungsschutz* study, 233 of the travelers (61%) had some degree of German citizenship at the time of travel; 141 (37%) of the travelers had exclusively German citizenship; 92 (25%) had German and secondary (dual) citizenship. Among this group of 92 travelers with dual or multiple citizenships were the following: 18 German-Moroccans, 17 German-Turks, 12 German-Syrians, and ten each for German-Afghans and German-Tunisians. Finally, Foreign citizenship numbers included 54 Turkish citizens (14%), 19 Syrian citizens (5%), and 13 with Russian citizenship (4%). Another 13% were listed as "other" and 2% as "unknown." With a total of 61% of the foreign fighters in the German *Verfassungsschutz* report having some form of German citizenship it seems clear that German citizenship alone was insufficient to dissuade jihadist mobilization.

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[87] Rabasa and Benard, *Eurojihad,* 12.

3.   Conversion Status

While the majority of fighters seemed to have an existing connection to Islam, conversion accounted for far fewer. Of the 294 cases for which the German government had data, 54 (18%) were identified as converts to Islam.

4.   Criminal Backgrounds

A more significant contributor to radicalization appears to be criminality, which may also be connected to a lack of integration. The federal report indicates that 249 of the 378 travelers had criminal backgrounds with local, state, or federal police (Figure 3). The study compared types of crimes before radicalization and after radicalization with interesting results. Before becoming radicalized, 117 of the eventual German travelers had criminal histories. Most common pre-radicalization offenses are broken up as follows: violent crime (87), property crimes (84), and politically motivated crimes (7).[88]

After radicalization, 161 were known to have committed crimes in Germany (Figure 4). In the post-radicalization look, however, the politically motivated crime category jumps to become the largest single category at 107 records, or 32% of the total. In the post-radicalization look every other category of criminality stays flat or is slightly reduced (as a percentage of total crime), with notable exception of drug related crimes, which drop from 15% of the pre-radicalization total to only 4% after radicalization, possibly indicating the influence of Islam on the lifestyle of the foreign fighters.[89]

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[88] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 12.

[89] Ibid.

Figure 3.   Pre-Radicalization Criminal Records

Adapted and translated from Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution], *Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind* [Analysis of the information available to German security authorities about the radicalization process of persons who have traveled to Syria under Islamist motivations], (Cologne, Germany: 2014), 12. http://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/14-12-11_12/anlage-analyse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

Figure 4.   Post-Radicalization Criminal Records

Adapted and translated from Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution], *Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind* [Analysis of the information available to German security authorities about the radicalization process of persons who have traveled to Syria under Islamist motivations], (Cologne, Germany: 2014), 12. http://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/14-12-11_12/anlage-analyse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

### 5.	Education

While 73 of the travelers were known to be in school up until their departure to Syria, only 21 of those were attending *Gymnasien* (college-preparatory high schools).[90] This indicates that migrants tended to be either less educated or less able to access higher education, possibly due to migration and language difficulties in childhood. This is further supported by the following numbers: 116 of the travelers had completed high school. Forty-one (35%) of those completed the college-preparatory *Gymnasium,* while 27 (23%) had completed the mid-tier *Realschule.* The study noted that this is slightly lower than the average German population statistics for completing those respective high schools (43% and 35%).

### 6.	Previous Conflict Experience

The last significant factor found in the Berlin government report was that 25% of the Berliner foreign fighters (15 total) had experience in previous foreign conflicts. Twelve of the fighters had previously fought in the Afghan-Pakistan region, two in Bosnia, and one in Chechnya. All 12 of the Afghan-Pakistan group had been members of the "German Taliban Mujahidin" (DTM)—the first all-German unit of jihadist foreign fighters.[91]

## F.	ANCHORING

The data from the German study are mixed on the question of anchoring. Some social movement theorists have argued that people who are anchored through regular work and who have commitments to spouses and children are unlikely to join movements and are even less likely to engage in the more risky forms of activism.[92] On the one hand,

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[90] German high schools are based on a tiered-track system where students are divided into different high schools beginning at age 10 based on assessed potential. The brightest are selected for the college-preparatory *Gymnasien,* average students are sent to *Realschulen* to prepare for trades or white-collar jobs. The lowest performing students are sent to vocational *Hauptschulen.* Immigrant communities are traditionally underrepresented in *Gymnasien* and overrepresented in *Hauptschulen.* For more, see Vanessa Furhmans, "In Search of a New Course," *Wall Street Journal,* June 27, 2011, http://www.wsj.com/articles/ SB10001424052702304066504576341353566196300 .

[91] Steinberg, *German Jihad*, 30–31.

[92] McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism," 70–71.

data from the German government do show that the German travelers tended to be on the lower end of the employment and education spectrum with approximately one-fifth unemployed and many others in low-wage jobs. The data on marriage and children, however, revealed a much higher number of married Germans undertook the personal risk of the trip to a war zone than original theories on anchoring would predict. Furthermore, that over a quarter of the travelers had children indicates that family commitments did not prevent these fighters from moving to higher-risk forms of activism.[93]

1.   Family Status

In the federal study, 148 of the travelers were listed as married, 149 were known to be single, and the marital status of the remaining 81 travelers was unknown. According to the study, 104 of the travelers were known to have children. Whereas in the federal-level report only about half of the travelers were married, the Berlin numbers were 70%. Moreover, a surprising number of German foreign fighters brought their families with them to the combat area. The federal *Verfassungsschutz* reports shows 18% of the foreign fighters traveled with family members while 35% of the Berlin subgroup traveled with some combination of spouses and children. This raises two questions for further study: 1) is marriage to an equally radical co-religionist a significant push into joining the ranks of foreign fighters? and 2) is travel to a romantic vision of sacred jihad more attractive than remaining home?

2.   Employment and Career

Out of the 378 German foreign fighters, 119 were either in school or employed before departure. The employment status of the remaining 177 foreign fighters was unknown. Of those not in schools, 46 were employed and 82 were officially listed as unemployed. Three very different interpretations of these numbers are possible. First, if one examines just the known employment data—ignoring full-time school commitments—this data would indicate that 64% of the German foreign fighters were

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[93] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 14–15.

unemployed before their departure. A second interpretation would be to treat school as an employment-like occupation. Factoring in school attendance as a form of employment changes the equation to 119 gainfully occupied against 82 unemployed—meaning just fewer than 40% of the fighters were unemployed. The third way to look at the numbers is to assume that Germany (like most governments) is reasonably good at tracking who is drawing unemployment checks, but is not as efficient at knowing where all of its employed residents work. By this estimation, the rate of 82 out of 378, or 21%, would be number of unemployed Germans joining radical jihad. By any of the above interpretations, it is safe to say that the unemployment rate among German foreign fighters was high before departure. Finally, the *Verfassungsschutz* report states that the jobs that were identified were overwhelmingly found in the lowest-skill and lowest-paying sectors of the German economy.[94]

G.   CONCLUSION

The German studies provide an unusually close look at a Western government's perspective on the foreign fighter phenomenon. Demographic data pulled from this and similar sources will assist researchers in better understanding the radicalization phenomenon within European Muslim communities. The data overwhelmingly indicate that face-to-face social networks—notably through Germany's Salafist scene—remain the most powerful force in radicalizing and mobilizing Islamist fighters. The German reports also indicate that bloc mobilization accounts for large numbers of Europeans traveling overseas to combat zones.

The data also show that integration issues, such as migration histories (either parental or personal), education, and employment do at least correlate to radicalizing, mobilizing and recruiting Islamist fighters to the end of 2015. The German government data suggests that either full or partial German citizenship had little to no deterrent effect on foreign fighter mobilization.

Finally, family anchoring factors (marriage and children) did not appear to dissuade foreign fighter mobilization. According to McAdam, people involved in high-

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[94] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 12.

risk activism should be "relatively free of personal constraints that would make participation especially risky."[95] Yet roughly half of the German foreign fighters in the *Verfassungsschutz* report and over 70% of the Berlin study were married when they left for jihad. The German federal government's report as well as several follow-on state government reports will continue to provide a trove of exceptional data for researchers examining why Europeans continue to leave their homes to join jihadist organizations.

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[95] McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism," 71.

III. GERMAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS: A MICRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The German government perspective on foreign fighters is instructive primarily because of its depth. Governments generally have access to a wide variety of information about their citizens, such as arrest records, immigration documents, passport applications, and vehicle registration documents. Moreover, government investigators can interview fighters' families and friends after departure and have access surveillance reports and dossiers of radicalized Islamists already under investigation. Taken together, these data sources imbue the German *Verfassungsschutz* reports with a level of demographic detail nearly impossible for an academic study to replicate. As useful as the findings of these German government reports are, however, their fundamental data remain largely inaccessible to academic researchers. Because of how the *Verfassungsschutz* data were collected—not to mention security concerns and a host of privacy laws—academics cannot simply revisit the data to test new hypotheses or conduct follow-on analysis of the German dataset. Open source data collection remains therefore an imperfect but necessary tool for academic research on jihadist foreign fighters.[96]

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the author's analysis of 99 German foreign fighters who all departed Germany between March of 2012 and October of 2015 and headed in the direction of the Syria/Iraq conflict zone. The 99 profiles were collected entirely from open sources between October of 2015 and mid-January of 2016. The dataset was analyzed in order to reveal the network connections of the 99 fighters, to measure their integration into German society and to assess their degree of anchoring or biographical availability for jihadist mobilization. Ancillary information discovered in the course of this analysis, but not directly related to networks, integration, and anchoring, is also presented in the hopes that it will provide a more complete picture and potentially inform future academic studies of the foreign fighter phenomenon.

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[96] Sageman, "Stagnation in Terrorism Research," 573.

This chapter will first describe the research methodology and will then present the basic demographic data on the 99 foreign fighter profiles. Next, this chapter will reveal the results of the link analysis on the connections between the 99 profiles prior to travel. The study will then return to a statistical examination of the German foreign fighters' integration and anchoring factors. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how this new information aligns with both the German *Verfassungsschutz* conclusions as well as and scholarly consensus on foreign fighter mobilization.

B.   METHODOLOGY

Google and other online search engines were the primary tools used to find news articles containing information on German foreign fighters. Since most of the news stories of interest for this research are found in German press reports, search terms were entered in German. The initial Boolean search string used was "Dschihad AND (Syrien OR Irak)." The initial search yielded multiple German news articles with dozens of names. Once the name or alias of a potential foreign fighter was identified, it was recorded in a spreadsheet and follow-on searches were conducted. Follow-on Google search terms included fighter's names or other identifying information from the initial results. Often, a media report about one foreign fighter would mention the names of friends or associates who were also foreign fighters.[97] In this way a total of 143 initial profiles were collected and added to the spreadsheet with up to 40 potential data fields to hold information on each foreign fighter.

The original list of 143 profiles was eventually reduced to 99. Several names were eliminated due to a lack of additional information discovery in follow-on searches. Other names were removed because further research revealed that these had not actually traveled to Syria or Iraq and had merely provided material support to travelers. Four of the original 143 profiles were found to be duplicates caused by media reporting irregularities, such as swapped first- and last- names and listing of aliases instead of

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[97] The method of using data from the first query to define subsequent searches is sometimes referred to as *snowball sampling*. This method is not as statistically reliable as random sampling, but is often the only way to gather data on populations who wish to remain hidden. See Douglas D. Heckathorn, "Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Populations," *Social Problems* 44, no. 2 (1997): 174, doi:10.2307/3096941.

names. A good example of this sort of irregularity is Munir Ibrahim: a foreign fighter from the city of Pforzheim, who left Germany in 2012 and now fights for ISIS.[98] Munir Ibrahim appears as "Munir I." in some German press reports and as "Ibrahim M." in others. Because of guidelines in the German press code, which emphasizes privacy rights of people accused of crimes, it is standard practice for German media to identify foreign fighters only by their first name and last initial.[99] Following the discovery of the Munir Ibrahim double listing, the database of foreign fighters was re-examined searching for overlapping demographic or background data as well as reversible first and last initials. In this way, one final double listing was eliminated.

Data sources for the profiles were primarily German national media organizations. The most detailed profiles of German foreign fighters are found in the national news magazine *Der Spiegel,* followed by *Die Welt, BILD,* Frankfurt's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* and Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung.* A variety of smaller local news sources and German television news websites also contributed to the information in the 99 profiles. For three profiles, additional biographical information was found in ISIS' propaganda magazine *Dabiq.* This information concerned the friendship and familial relationship between three German foreign fighters Ibrahim B. (Abu Junaydah al Almani), Badr B. (Abu Hafs al Almani), and Fared Saal (Abu Luqman al Almani).[100] While ISIS propaganda should generally be treated with suspicion, there is no reason why the preexisting friendship between Fared Saal and Ibrahim B. and the familial relationship between Ibrahim and Badr B. should be a fabrication. Finally, two German-language weblogs were very helpful in assembling the profiles of the German foreign fighters. Both are considered credible sources by mainstream German media. The

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[98] Joseph Röhmel "Mann mit den vielen Leben: Netzwerk der Totgesagten" [The Man with Many Lives: Network of the Presumed-Dead], Bayerischer Rundfunk [Bavarian Broadcasting Service], November 18, 2015, http://www.br .de/nachrichten/is-kaempfer-auferstehung-100.html.

[99]After a fighter achieves a certain level of public notoriety, however (appearing unmasked in a beheading video or publicly calling for death of the German Chancellor in a YouTube video, for example), the German press tends to abandon their earlier self-restraint and freely publishes the fighter's full name. For the German Press Code, see: "Pressekodex" [Press Code], Deutcher Presserat [German Press Council], accessed March 4, 2016, http://www.presserat.de/presserat/downloads/.

[100] "Amongst the Believers are Men" *Dabiq* 12, (2015): 55, http://jihadology.net/2015/11/18/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-magazine-dabiq-12%E2%80%B3/.

first is *Jih@d,* which is a side project of German journalist Florian Flade, who also writes on radical Islamism and foreign fighters for the national publication *Die Welt.*[101] The second blog consulted for this project was *Erasmus Monitor*, the author of which remains anonymous.[102]

Profiles were kept in the database only when at least two independent sources could be found to agree that the profiled individual was a German resident prior to departure and that the person's apparent intended destination was the Syria-Iraq conflict area. The two independent sources could be two separate news articles, a weblog and a news article, or a news article and *Dabiq.*

Discarded profiles were not entirely abandoned, however; some were retained for use in the Palantir network analysis. Among the profiles that did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the primary foreign fighter dataset were individuals identified as recruiters, supporters, or enablers of foreign fighters. Mrs. S., the mother of foreign fighters Emra and Ismail S., is a good example of several such enablers encountered. The brothers Emra and Ismail from Cologne were both members of the German jihadist Salafist group *Millatu Ibrahim* who left Germany in the spring of 2013 after their organization was outlawed in Germany. Like the rest of the *Millatu Ibrahim* travelers, the brothers first went to Egypt before continuing on to Syria. Since her sons departed Germany, Mrs. S. has been stopped and searched at the Cologne Bonn Airport on two separate occasions on her way to Turkey. On the first occasion, in November of 2013, Mrs. S. had 50 AK-47 assault rifle magazines packed in her luggage. On her second trip a month later, Mrs. S. was in possession of 187 magazines, 3 rifle scopes, 5 cellphones, and both of her sons' passports. On both occasions, German authorities allowed Mrs. S. to continue her journey with all of her possessions.[103] Mrs. S. and other similar supporters were added to a separate list for inclusion in the network analysis because determining network interconnectedness of foreign fighters was a primary objective of this research. For the

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[101] Florian Flade, *Jih@d* (blog), accessed February 5, 2016, https://ojihad.wordpress.com/.

[102] *Erasmus Monitor* (blog), accessed February 4, 2016, http://erasmus-monitor.blogspot.com/.

[103] Markus Wehner, "Immer mehr deutsche Frauen im Dschihad,"[Always More German Women in Jihad], *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* March 8, 2014, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/syrien-krieg-immer-mehr-deutsche-frauen-im-dschihad-12837534 . html

supporter and recruiter category, only network connection data was retained (the relationship between Mrs. S. and her sons, for example). Other demographic data, such as age, hometown, and marital status were not collected or maintained for these actors.

Analysis of the 99 foreign fighters and their surrounding network was conducted using the Palantir visual analytics tool. Once assembled, the entire dataset of 99 foreign fighters was imported into Palantir as a single structured upload. Next, relationship links between the 99 foreign fighters and any known recruiters, supporters, enablers, and public figures of the Salafist scene were added to the dataset. Finally, geographical information, such as city coordinates, and German state boundaries from were uploaded to Palantir to create the basic framework for a limited geographic analysis of German foreign fighters.[104] In this way both the social network connections and the geographic distribution of the 99 foreign fighters could be analyzed visually.

Integration and anchoring factors of the 99 profiled fighters were analyzed using traditional statistical methods outside of Palantir. Factors used to determine integration into German society included ethnicity and migration backgrounds, citizenship, previous criminality, conversion status, and previous conflict experience. Biographical availability factors used to determine anchoring included family, school and career status of the profiled fighters.[105]

As with all such studies, the profiles of the 99 German foreign fighters suffer from information gaps. One of the limitations of collecting data through press reports, blogs, and social media postings is that information is not uniformly accessible for all variables in all cases. Indeed, even the German domestic intelligence service—despite their additional access to police and intelligence reports—lamented gaps in their background and radicalization data on the subjects of their report.[106] Had the goal of this thesis been limited to assessing anchoring and integration in German society, more profiles would have been eliminated in favor of higher information density. Since this

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[104] German State boundaries and other geographic data sourced from DIVA GIS, http://www.diva-gis.org/Data.

[105] Snow, et al., "Social Networks and Social Movements" 794.

[106] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 5.

research was designed to also examine the network integration of the foreign fighters, however, a larger sample set (N=99) was necessary. Therefore, profiles that had good network connection data but were otherwise short on biographic data were retained. Statistical results presented in this analysis will therefore clearly specify when smaller subsample (n) sizes were used.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE 99 FOREIGN FIGHTERS

This section provides the basic demographic data of the 99 profiles, including gender, age, and current status (alive, dead, or imprisoned). It also provides context on the timing of their departure from Germany as well as their most recent German city and state of residence.

1. Gender

In this new dataset, 85 of the foreign fighters are men and 14 are women. This male/female ratio is similar with that of the German *Verfassungsschutz* study, which found a ratio of 89 men to 11 women.[107] As discussed in Chapter II, however, the number of women mobilized for the jihadist cause in Syria is unprecedented: female participation in historic foreign fighter or jihadist mobilization prior to 2012 has never exceeded 1%.[108]

2. Age

Out of the 99 profiles, the ages of 60 German foreign fighters were discoverable in the source material for this study. For consistency, the age at the time of departure was recorded, rather than the age that a given foreign fighter would be today. German press reports occasionally differed on the ages of individual fighters. Sometimes this was the result of press articles being published at different dates—fighters continued to age and German newspapers reported fighters ages based on their age at the time of publication— not their age at the time of departure. In cases where a fighter's age was in question, article publication dates were compared with reported departure dates to determine if an

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[107] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 8.

[108] Malet, *Foreign Fighters,* 103.

age at departure could be determined. Finally, for reporting purposes, all ages are binned in three-year groupings in order to smooth out any misreported or misinterpreted age data.

The average age of the German foreign fighter in this dataset is 26 at the time of departure. This finding is consistent with the *Verfassungsschutz* data (26.5), Hafez's study of suicide bombers in Iraq (27), and the Sinjar records (27).[109] Figure 5 provides an overview of the age ranges of the dataset.

Figure 5.   Age at Time of Travel
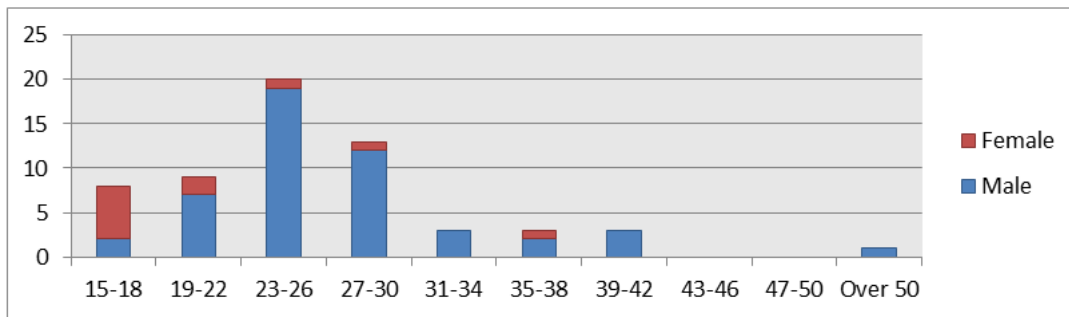
3.   Gender

The Average age for women was 21 while the average age for men was 27. Indeed, in this analysis, the 15–18-age bracket is disproportionately female: 6 women to 2 men, while very other age bins are male-dominated with a maximum of 2 females in each age grouping. This shows a preference toward recruiting extremely young women.

4.   Current Status

A large number of the German foreign fighters (46 of 99) have died since leaving Germany. An additional 13 were listed in media sources as being detained, and most of those are in German prisons after returning home for various reasons. Of the 46 deceased foreign fighters, 16 died in unspecified combat, nine were listed as suicide bombers, eight died in enemy airstrikes, two died at the hands of a rival jihadist group, two died in a

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[109] Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 23; Felter and Fishman, "Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq," 23.

vehicle accident, and one was killed by friendly fire. This total leaves eight causes of death unaccounted for. All of the above deaths were men except for the two car accident victims who died in Egypt before their travel group continued on to Syria.[110] Figure 6 shows the current disposition of the profiled German foreign fighters.

Figure 6.   German Foreign Fighter Disposition
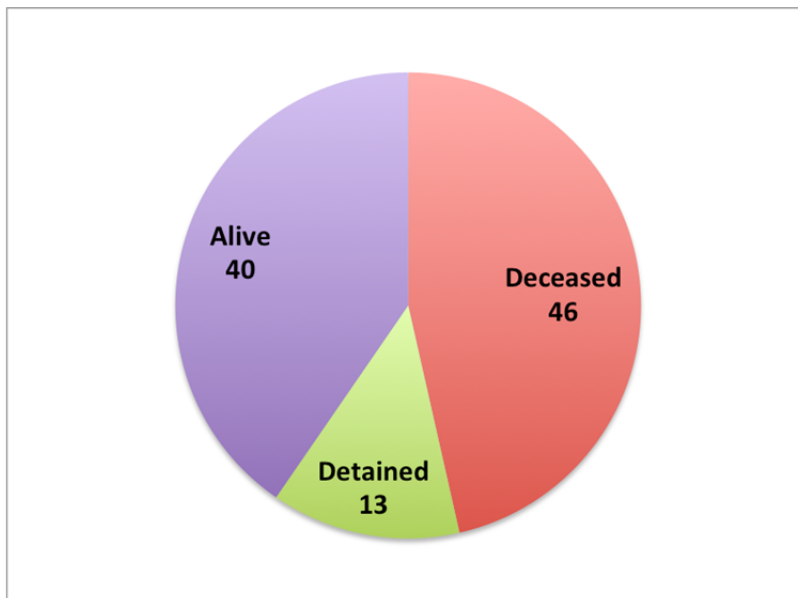
5.   Date of Departure

Of The 99 fighters profiled in this dataset, all of the known departure dates occurred between April 2012 and fall of 2015. Travel dates could be determined for 44 of the 99 profiles and Figure 7 shows the distribution of the foreign fighter travel dates by year and quarter. A quarterly display was necessary because German press reports typically list departure dates by month or season, rather than providing the exact departure date. Some of the fighters had multiple departure dates, meaning they returned to Germany after some time in Syria only to return to the combat zone later. Kerim Mark B., from the German-Dutch border town of Kleve, counts as a sort of frequent flyer by German foreign fighter standards. According to German news sources, originally

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[110] Florian Flade, "Deutsche Salafistinnen sterben bei Autounfall" [German Salafists Killed in Vehicle Accident], *Die Welt,* November 8, 2012, http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article110767894/ Deutsche-Salafistinnen-sterben-bei-Autounfall.html.

radicalized in 2008. He first traveled to Syria in 2013, but returned to Germany in January of 2014 to have his leg treated in a German hospital. He had apparently suffered a shrapnel injury fighting in the outskirts of Aleppo. He managed to evade German authorities and return back to Syria later in 2014 and was ultimately arrested in Turkey (presumably on another cross-border sojourn) whence he was remanded to German custody.[111] In cases like Kerim's, only the fighter initial departure date to the combat area was included in the statistical analysis.

Figure 7.   Time of Departure
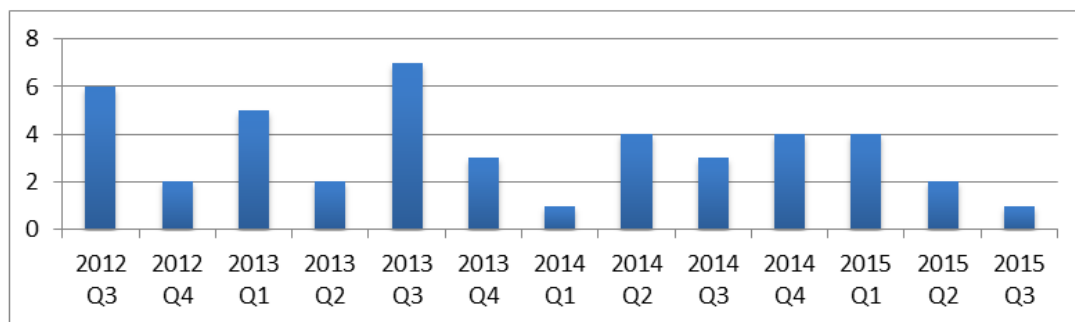
The departure dates in Figure 7 correlate with some significant instances of group travel noted in German media reports. The first data spike coincides with the departure of several members of the outlawed German Salafist organization *Millatu Ibrahim*.[112] Due to *Millatu Ibrahim's* importance in the development of the German foreign fighter movement, as well as the infamy several of its members have achieved, a brief description of the organization's development and key leaders is necessary.

a.   *Millatu Ibrahim: the First Wave of German Foreign Fighters in Syria*

In late 2011, Austrian jihadist Salafist Mohammed Mahmoud was released from prison in Vienna, where he had served a four-year sentence for his founding role in the

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[111] Marc Drewello, "Diese Terroristen bedrohen Deutschland," [These Terrorists Threaten Germany], *Stern,* January 29, 2015, http://www.stern.de/ politik/deutschland/deutsche-dschihadisten--diese-islamisten-bedrohen-deutschland-3477254.html

[112] Florian Flade, "Deutsche Salafisten fliehen nach Ägypten" [German Salafists Flee to Egypt], *Die Welt*, August 10, 2012, http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article108566593/Deutsche-Salafisten-fliehen-nach-Aegypten.html.

Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), a German-language jihadist propaganda site that translated and posted Al Qaeda and other jihadist media for German-speaking audiences.[113] After his release, Mahmoud and his wife moved to Germany where Mahmoud immediately made contact with the more radical elements of the Salafist scene in Berlin. There, Mahmoud met former gangster rapper Denis Cuspert (aka Deso Dogg, aka Abu Talha al Almani), who by this time was a rising star in a growing movement of politically active German Salafists.[114]

Denis Cuspert was born in Berlin in 1975 to a German mother and a Ghanaian father, who left the family not long after Cuspert's birth. As a young adult, Cuspert gained modest recognition as a gangster rapper in Berlin's Hip Hop scene. His tattooed body and his criminal record, including firearms charges and property crimes, bolstered his "street cred." Despite his contacts in both the United States and German Hip Hop community and despite his well-circulated rap albums, Cuspert never managed to turn his musical career into a financial success.[115]

Cuspert's transformation from mediocre gangster rapper to jihadi Salafist superstar occurred in the span of about three years. Between 2008 and 2010 Cuspert gradually distanced himself from the Hip Hop scene and became increasingly active in Berlin's Salafist scene. There, he caught the attention of well-known Salafist preacher, Pierre Vogel. Not long after Cuspert and Vogel's first recorded meeting in February 2010, Cuspert found himself on the Salafist speaking circuit—appearing in Islam seminars held in cities across Germany—where Cuspert would recount his personal story of redemption from a life of crime and drugs to one of purity and service to God.[116]

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[113] Steinberg, *German Jihad,* 133.

[114] Dirk Baehr, "Dschihadistischer Salafismus in Deutschland" [Jihadist Salafism in Germany], in Schneiders ed. *Salafismus in Deutschland*, 240.

[115] Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport—Berlin [Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sports], *Lageanalyse Denis Cuspert—eine jihadistische Karriere* [Situation Report Denis Cuspert: A Jihadist Career], (Berlin, Germany: Verfassungsschutz, September 2014), 7–8, https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/aktuelle-meldungen/2014/artikel.175431.php.

[116] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Lageanalyse Denis Cuspert,* 9–12.

During this time Cuspert appeared at Islam seminars alongside several of Germany's most well-known Salafist preachers. In addition to being mentored by Pierre Vogel, Cuspert appeared in YouTube recordings at Islam seminars alongside Abdellatif Rouali and Ibrahim Abou Nagie and created a YouTube video greeting with Sven Lau in Mecca in late 2010.[117] Having forsworn rap music as *haram* (forbidden), Cuspert turned his lyrical talent toward composing Islamic chants called *anashid* (*anashid* is the Arabic plural form of *nashid*) in German and took performing those *anashid* at Salafist events were he was increasingly in demand. By the end of 2010, Cuspert's *anashid* had taken on decidedly jihadist themes—openly calling for German Muslims to travel and fight in Afghanistan and Palestine, for example. Cuspert's radicalization thus took place while he was under the direct tutelage of several of Germany's most prominent Salafist preachers and while he was in a position to influence large audiences of young Muslims at seminars across Germany.[118]

By the time Cuspert met Mahmoud in Berlin in late 2011, Cuspert had been under the observation of German authorities for several months due to his increasingly radical *anashid* and his growing influence among young and radicalizing Salafists in Germany. Arid Uka, the young German mentioned in Chapter II who murdered two U.S. service members on a bus at Frankfurt's airport is one such example. Uka and Cuspert were connected through Facebook and Uka apparently listened to some of Cuspert's *anashid* immediately before launching his attack. Cuspert was never directly linked to the attack, but the apparent influence he had on Uka was enough to put Cuspert on government watch lists.[119]

Also around the same time that Mahmoud moved to Berlin, a new web-based Salafist organization calling itself *Millatu Ibrahim* emerged and became popular among jihad-inclined Salafists in Germany. Though it is not known how the organization was

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[117] "Abu Malik Deso Dogg Live mit einer video Botschaft aus Mekka bei der Hadsch mit dem EZP Team" [Abu Malik Deso Dogg Live with a Message from Mecca at the Haj with the EZP Team], YouTube video, 1:34, Posted by "TheFighterOfIslam," November 21, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jhx-ZQ5jdjA.

[118] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Lageanalyse Denis Cuspert,* 14

[119] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Lageanalyse Denis Cuspert,* 15

first established, it is clear that Mahmoud, Cuspert, and Cuspert's good friend, Hasan Keskin all rose to *Millatu Ibrahim's* leadership inner circle in short order in the first months of 2012. Not long after Mahmoud's arrival in Berlin, he relocated to the German industrial town of Solingen in North Rheine-Westphalia along with several of *Millatu Ibrahim's* members. In Solingen, the group established the Millatu Ibrahim Mosque—giving the Internet-based organization a physical headquarters. Besides Solingen and Berlin, the group had a notable presence in Hamburg, Frankfurt, Dinslaken, and several other German cities.[120] *Millatu Ibrahim* continued to grow and to attract new members, including the young convert and eventual suicide bomber, Robert Baum, mentioned at the beginning of Chapter II. It was not long before *Millatu Ibrahim* faced its first challenge from another radical group and took the next step in its development as a jihadist organization.[121]

b. *Clashes with Right Wing Extremists and German Police*

During the spring 2012 federal elections campaign in Germany a rightwing extremist organization, "Citizen's movement pro North Rheine-Westphalia," (pro-NRW) began holding a series of campaign events deliberately designed to provoke Islamic organizations. Pro-NRW events generally included anti-immigrant and ant-Islamic messaging, they chose demonstration sites that were near Islamic community centers and mosques. Finally, Pro-NRW activists were known to occasionally flash signs depicting the Prophet Mohammed in caricature—hoping to provoke a response.[122]

One such political demonstration organized by pro-NRW occurred in the Solingen on May 1, 2012. Members of *Millatu Ibrahim*, along with other Muslims in the area organized a counter demonstration. Both the pro-NRW demonstration and counter-demonstration proceeded peacefully until a pro NRW member hoisted a new poster depicting the prophet Mohammed in an unflattering manner. Following this insult the *Millatu Ibrahim* counterdemonstrators began to throw rocks and bottles and engage in

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[120] Baehr, "Dschihadistischer Salafismus in Deutschland" 240.

[121] Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2014,* 146.

[122] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Lageanalyse Denis Cuspert*, 15–16.

violent clashes with pro NRW demonstrators as well as with German police. Two German police officers and 14 Salafists were hurt in the action.[123]

The entire melee repeated itself in Bonn a few days later on May 5. This time, nearly 400 Salafists turned out for a counterdemonstration against a Pro-NRW rally. Denis Cuspert, Munir Ibrahim, Hasan Keskin and several others already mentioned in the preceding pages were among this crowd. When Pro-NRW activists predictably displayed the Mohammed caricatures, a rolling street battle ensued. After about 45 minutes of fighting 29 German police officers were injured, two of them seriously, and over 100 activists were arrested.[124] One of the arrested Salafists was Murat K, who was later convicted of attempted murder for stabbing two police officers with a knife during the brawl.[125]

The events of 1 and 5 May led the German Interior minister to officially ban and disband *Millatu Ibrahim* on May 29, 2012. Not long after the official ban, approximately 30 members of the organization left Germany. The core of the group, including Mahmoud and Cuspert, went to Egypt next, where they remained for several months. After leaving Egypt, most *Millatu Ibrahim* members continued on to Libya and then on to Turkey and ultimately Syria in late 2012 or early 2013.[126] Although officially disbanded, *Millatu Ibrahim* continued to influence the development of jihadist Salafism in Germany. Many of those who left Germany became prolific recruiters over the Internet, and many who stayed behind continued their activism—recruiting new followers who would join the fight in Syria in later waves of German jihadist mobilization.

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[123] Senatsverwaltung Berlin, *Lageanalyse Denis Cuspert,* 15–16.

[124] "Salafisten vs. Pro-NRW: Gewaltausbruch alarmiert Sicherheitsbehörden" [Salafists vs. Pro-NRW: Outbreak of Violence Alarms Security Authorities], *Spiegel Online,* May 6, 2012, http://www.spiegel.de/ politik/deutschland/ salafisten-gegen-pro-nrw-innenminister-kuendigt-konsequenzen-an-a-831641.html.

[125] Baehr, "Dschihadistischer Salafismus in Deutschland," 241.

[126] Guido Steinberg, "Junud al-Sham and the German Foreign Fighter Threat," *CTC Sentinel,* 9 no. 2, (February, 2016): 26, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/february-2016.

6. Geographic Distribution

As discussed in Chapter I, the geographic distribution of foreign fighter recruitment helps to indicate whether online factors or face-to-face network connections were more influential in mobilization of foreign fighters. If Internet-based radicalization is dominant, recruits should be evenly distributed across German society—or at least German Muslim populations. If, however, face-to-face recruitment and radicalization predominates, then this should be evidenced through geographic clusters. Previous research shows foreign fighter recruitment to be a clustered phenomenon. According to Holman, "Belgian and French foreign fighters might have represented a quarter of all European foreign fighters in Iraq. The majority traveled between 2004 and 2005. Two foreign fighter networks, Kari and 19th, were responsible for the bulk of these individuals. These networks were involved exclusively in supporting the movement of foreign fighters to Iraq and bringing back into Europe individuals who had been fighting or were wounded."[127]

Analysis of the data on the 99 German foreign fighters shows distinct geographic clusters at both the state and city levels. A state-level analysis reveals that nearly half of the fighters (44) lived in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia before mobilization. The second most common state of origin was Hessen, followed by Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg. When adjusted for state population, the German city-state of Bremen ranks first with the highest fighter/population ratio. Table 1 shows the foreign fighter distribution among Germany's 16 federal states.

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[127] Timothy Holman, "Belgian and French Foreign Fighters in Iraq, 2003–2005: A Comparative Case Study," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38, no. 8 (2015): 616.

Table 1.   Foreign Fighter State of Origin

State	# Fighters	Rank	Population (2011 Census)	Population Adjusted Rank
North Rhine-Westphalia	44	1	17,538,251	2
Hessen	14	2	5,971,816	3
Lower Saxony	9	3	7,777,992	6
Baden-Württemberg	7	4	10,486,660	8
Bavaria	6	5	12,397,614	9
Berlin	6	6	3,292,365	5
Hamburg	4	7	1,706,696	4
Bremen	2	8	650,863	1
Schleswig-Holstein	2	9	2,800,119	7
Saxony-Anhalt	1	10	2,287,040	11
Thuringia	1	11	2,188,589	10
Brandenburg	0	-	2,455,780	-
Mecklenburg-West Pomerania	0	-	1,609,982	-
Rhineland-Palatinate	0	-	3,989,808	-
Saarland	0	-	999,623	-
Saxony	0	-	4,056,799	-

Additionally, city-level data shows clear signs of clustering around five German cities: Dinslaken, Wolfsburg, Herford, Solingen, and Bonn. Four of these cities are identified in German media sources as cluster cities with up to 20 foreign fighters traveling to the combat area from Wolfsburg[128] and more than a dozen from Dinslaken[129] Table 2 shows the top nine cities German cities source cities inlet study group. Together, these nine cities account for nearly 60% of the fighters in the dataset.

Table 2.   Foreign Fighter City of Origin

City/Town	# Fighters	Population	Population Adjusted Rank
Dinslaken	7	69,472	1
Wolfsburg	9	121,758	2
Herford	3	64,088	3
Solingen	6	155,316	4
Bonn	9	309,869	5
Frankfurt	12	687,775	6
Hamburg	5	1,734,000	7
Berlin	5	3,502,000	8
Bremen	2	650,863	9

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[128] Von der Heide, et al., "Von Wolsfburg in den Dchihad."

[129] Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2014,* 146.

Five German states had no foreign fighters identified in this study. Most of those states were part of the former East Germany, where foreign immigration was virtually nonexistent during the Cold War and only picked up in any measurable way within the last decade. This distribution also reflects migration patterns discussed in Chapter I. Figure 8 shows the population adjusted state density of the 99 foreign fighters as well as the top nine cluster cities.

Figure 8.   Population Adjusted State Density of German Foreign Fighters

D.   NETWORKS

Networks have traditionally played an important role in the recruitment, radicalization, and mobilization for high-risk activism. Networks help to forge a common in-group identity, facilitate recruitment among like-minded individuals, and provide safe areas in which members can "try-out" increasingly riskier forms of activism.[130] Yet, several high-profile *lone-wolf* attacks in the West, along with an increasingly competent jihadist recruiting presence on the Internet, has led some to argue that terrorist recruiting

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[130] Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 21; Wickham, "Interests, Ideas, and Islamist Outreach in Egypt," 232.

in the West has undergone a transformation. As Sageman argues, "face-to-face radicalization has been replaced by online radicalization. The same support and validation that young people used to derive from their offline peer groups are now found in online forums away from traditional social networks."[131]

The findings of the German *Verfassungsschutz* report, however, seem to challenge Sageman's assessment. The *Verfassungsschutz* study indicates that 79% of German foreign fighters in the Syrian Civil War were connected to some element of the Salafist scene before they departed Germany.[132] The report finds that connection to the Qur'an distribution network *"Lies!,"* attendance of Islam seminars, attendance of Salafist mosques, and connection to well-known Salafist leaders are all indications of scene connection.[133] What the *Verfassungsschutz* assessment leaves unclear, however, is the extent to which these scene activities are related to each other and whether attending an Islam seminar is the same thing as being in a traditional social network.

To address this gap, this study collected relationship data on the face-to-face social connections between the 99 profiled foreign fighters before their departure to Syria. This relationship data was then combined with the information on each foreign fighter's scene connections (participation with *"Lies!,"* connection to Salafist scene leaders, etc.) and then aggregated in the visual analytics program, Palantir. Visual analysis of the dataset reveals the complex interconnections between the profiled fighters and demonstrates that most of the fighters in this dataset were mobilized within a single and interconnected network.

1.   The German Foreign Fighter Network Map

The first Palantir network map (Figure 9) represents the 99 profiled German foreign fighters, their connections to recruiters, supporters, popular Salafist preachers, and Salafist scene organizations. It also shows how the fighters are connected to the top 9 cluster cities in Germany. Links and nodes on the network map are color-coded by type.

[131] Marc Sageman, "The Next Generation of Terror," *Foreign Policy* 165 (March-April, 2008): 41.

[132] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 14.

[133] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 14.

Red nodes represent the original 99 fighters and the red links indicate personal connections between those 99 nodes. Blue nodes represent the recruiters, supporters, and preachers of the Salafist scene while blue links represent the connections to the same. Yellow nodes and links represent prominent Salafist scene organizations and their connections.

The first network map shows that most of the profiled fighters were mobilized within a single interconnected traditional social network. The network map also shows a high degree of interconnectedness among fighters around the individual cluster cities—strong evidence for bloc recruitment.

Figure 9.   The German Foreign Fighter Network
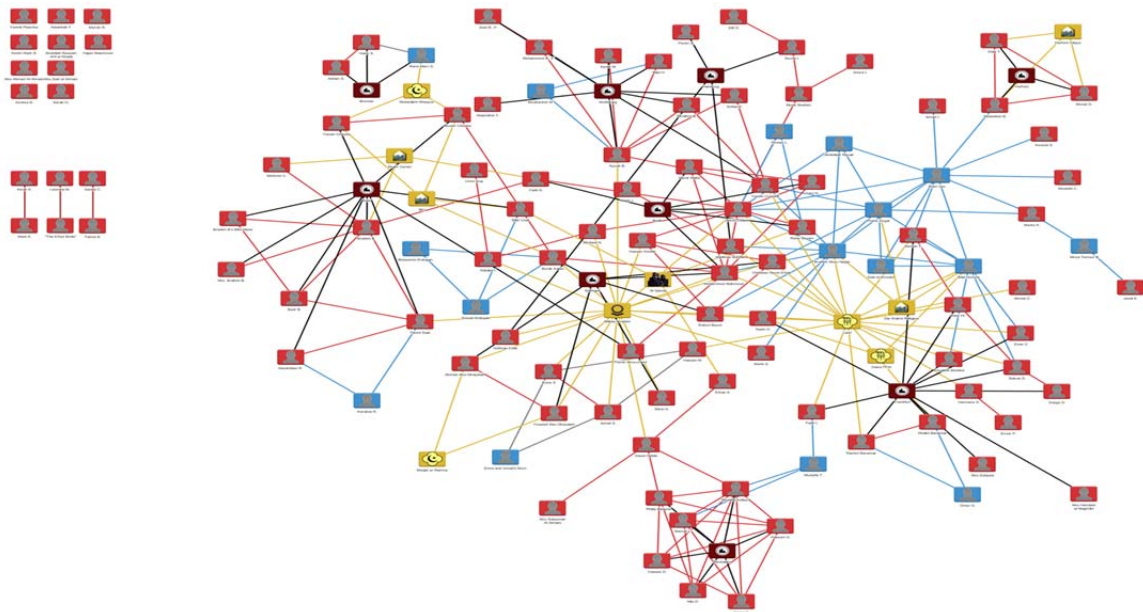
The overall German foreign fighter map in Figure 9 shows ten *orphan nodes* in the top left corner of the network map. Orphan nodes are those nodes that have no verifiable connection to any other node in the network. Additionally, three pairs of nodes are displayed below the orphan nodes. These represent foreign fighters who, while connected to one another, could not be tied to the larger network.

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In the following paragraphs and figures, the different layers of the foreign fighter network will be analyzed independently. Breaking the network map down by connection types allows a clearer understanding of the relationships between different nodes. In all of the network maps, the relative position of the connected nodes within the network is retained. When different layers of the network map are removed, some nodes become disconnected (orphaned) from the rest of the network. Orphan nodes and pairs are displayed on the top left corner of the map. In this way the significance of connection types is revealed.

2.   Personal Connections Between the 99 Profiled Foreign Fighters

The first level of the link analysis (Figure 10) shows all of the personal friendship connections and associations between each of the 99 foreign fighters before they departed to the combat area. Each node on the network map represents a single German foreign fighter. This analysis shows that 71 of the 99 profiles had a personal connection with at least one other German foreign fighter before departing Germany. This initial network picture also shows 27 orphan nodes and seven disconnected pairs. Finally, this first level of link analysis shows three distinctive clusters of individual fighters. These clusters correlate geographically to Dinslaken, Bonn, and Wolfsburg.

Figure 10.   Personal Connections Between Foreign Fighters Before Travel
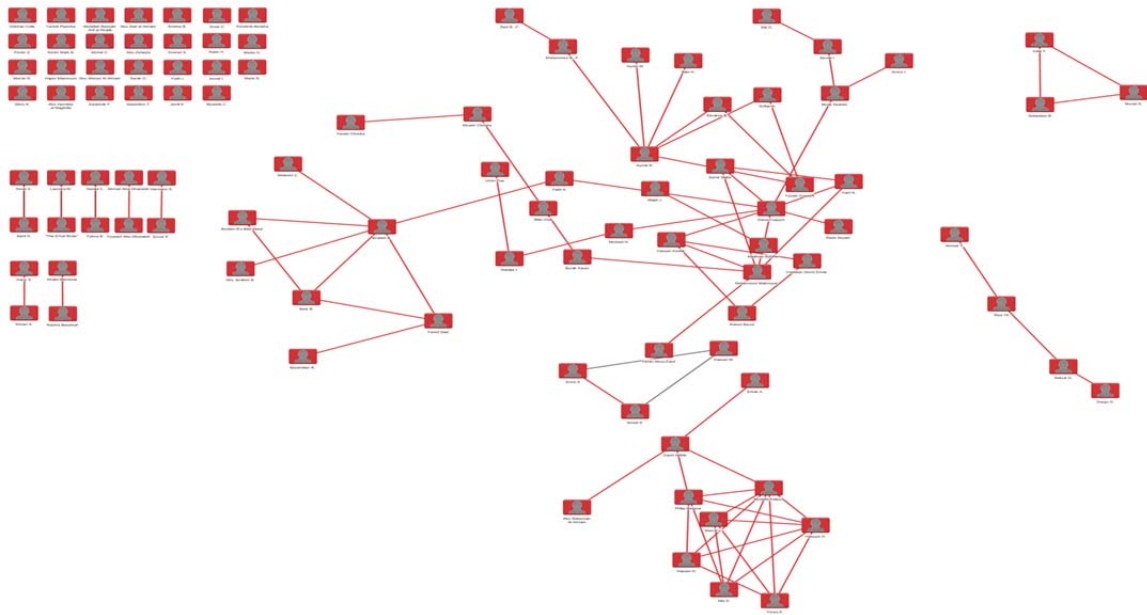

3.   Connections with Recruiters, Supporters, and Salafist Scene Leaders

While maintaining the relative position of the 99 fighters on the map, the connections to recruiters, supporters, and Salafist scene leaders are added in Figure 11. Blue-colored nodes and links represent these people and relationship. Relationships with Salafist scene leaders were tracked because of the *Verfassungsschutz* report finding that 167 of the 378 foreign fighters in that study had connections to "well-known Salafists" before their departure to Syria.[134]

In total, 35 fighters had links to one or more recruiters, supporters or Salafist scene leaders before departure. When these relationships are added to the network map, the number of orphan nodes is reduced to just 17 with only five pairs of fighters remaining disconnected from other fighters or recruiters. Therefore, 82 of the 99 profiled fighters had a preexisting face-to-face relationship with at least one fighter, recruiter, supporter, or Salafist scene leader before their departure to the combat area.

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[134]Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 13.

Figure 11.   Foreign Fighter Links to Recruiters, Supporters, and Salafist Scene Leaders
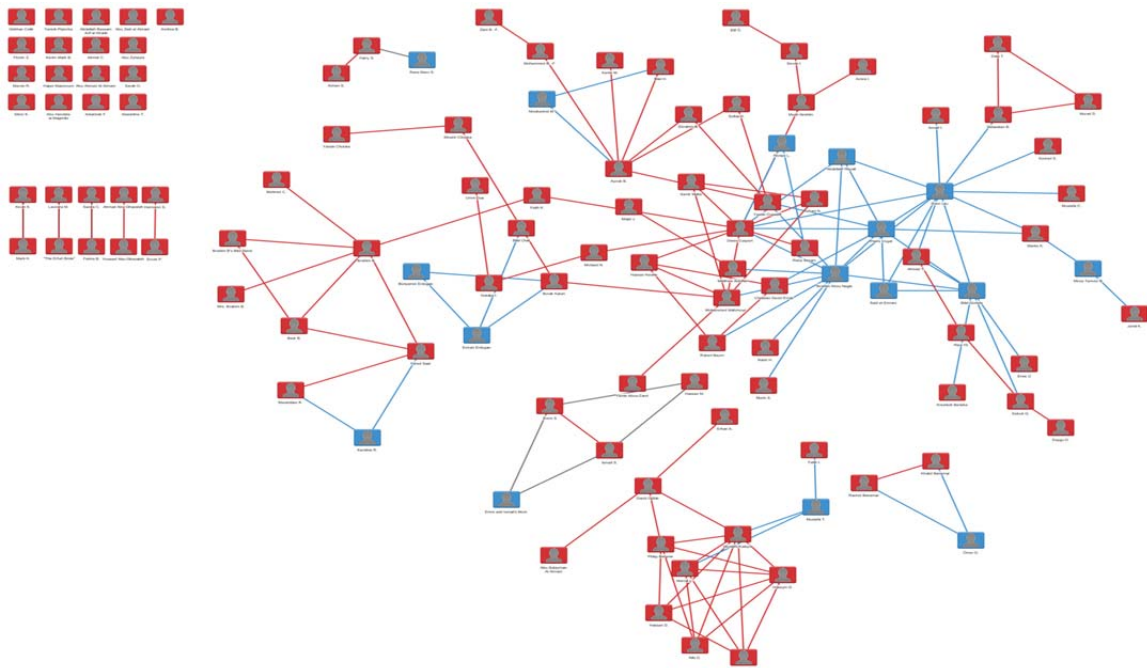
4.   Group Membership and Participation

As the German federal *Verfassungsschutz* report indicated, connections to Salafist groups in Germany were relevant for a large number of foreign fighters.[135] The next layer on the Palantir network map (Figure 12) shows those connections. German Salafist groups—most importantly *"Lies!"* and *Millatu Ibrahim*—are depicted in yellow on the network map. Research for this project identified 20 fighters with membership in *Millatu Ibrahim* and 18 who had participated with the *"Lies!"* Qur'an distribution campaign. Five of the fighters are linked to both *"Lies!"* and *Millatu Ibrahim*. Other Salafist organizations on the map include Salafist mosques, *dawa* organizations, and jihadist organizations, such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Establishing that these fighters belonged to the same organizations does not mean that they knew one another. Indeed, both *"Lies!"* and *Millatu Ibrahim* had members in multiple German cities and it would be unrealistic to assume that all members of these

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[135] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse,* 13.

organizations knew all other members. Shared membership in such organizations does, however, establish that these fighters were part of a common network before or during their radicalization.

When the group links are added to the network map in Figure 12, the number of orphan nodes is reduced to just 14 with three remaining disconnected pairs. Thus, the Palantir network analysis shows that 79 out of 99 profiles were mobilized out of a single and interconnected Salafist network inside Germany. Only 20 foreign fighters could not be directly linked to the network—making it possible, but not definitive, to suggest that these 20 were radicalized and recruited online. A closer examination of these remaining fighters is therefore necessary in order to determine whether all 20 were, in fact, truly disconnected from the Salafist scene and whether they may have been radicalized through online social media, instead of through traditional network connections.

Figure 12.   Foreign Fighters, Known Preachers and Recruiters
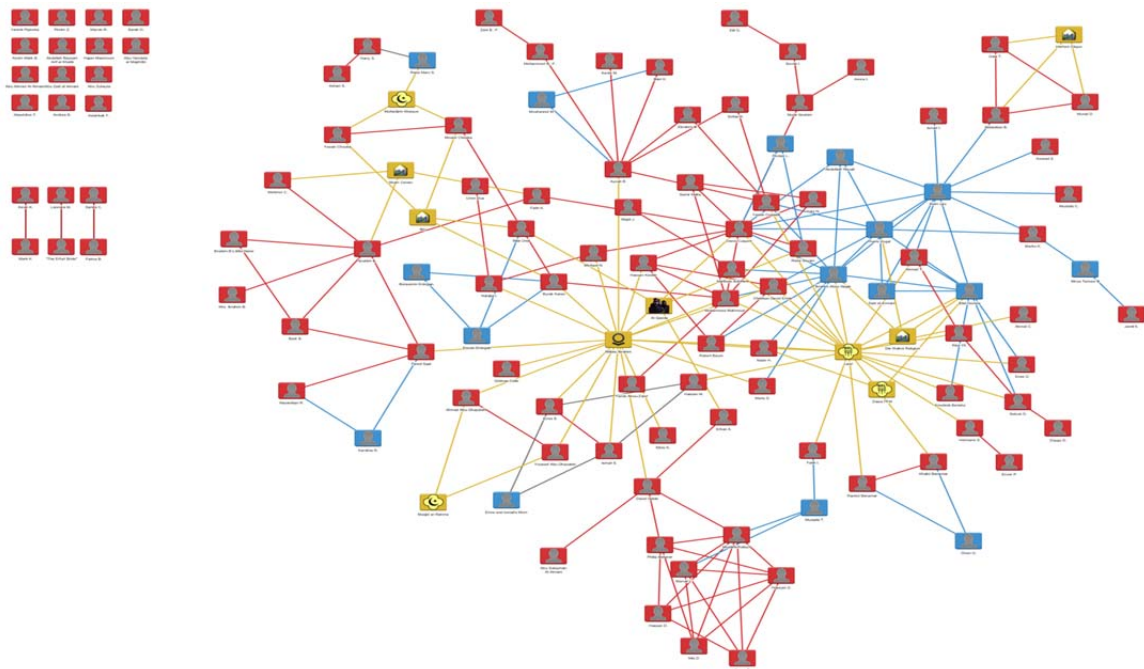
5. Traditional vs. Online Mobilization

The 20 remaining foreign fighters consist of 14 men and 6 women. Their average age is 24 and they come from 18 different cities in Germany, although three of them do come from previously identified cluster cities (two from Frankfurt and one from Hamburg). Based on qualitative analysis on the background and demographic data of these remaining fighters, four broad categories emerge. These categories are reflected in Figure 13 and discussed in detail over the following paragraphs.

Figure 13.   Possible Online Radicalization Among 20 Non-Connected Foreign Fighters
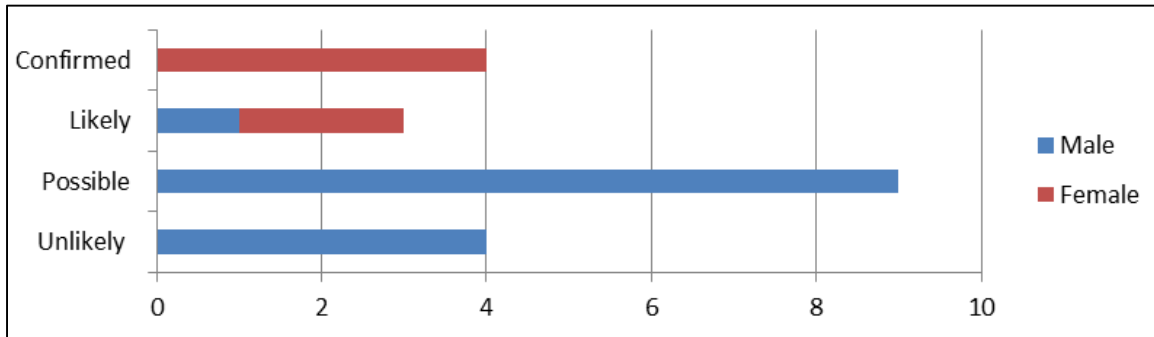
In the first category, German press reports confirm online social media was the primary radicalization factor. All four of these cases are women who were radicalized and recruited through undisclosed social media contacts. All four came from different German cities, though each linked up with one other woman immediately before traveling to Turkey. German press reports indicate that jihadist groups in Syria are running a deliberate recruiting campaign to attract Western women to the combat area, and that they particularly target very young women.[136]

Fighters in the second category were similarly geographically dispersed in Germany and press reports provide no indication of face-to-face contact with the Salafist scene. At the same time, press reports do not specifically cite online factors in their radicalization either. This group includes two women and one man. One of the women in this group, Sarah O., has since become a regular blogger—encouraging other young

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[136] Wehner, "Immer mehr deutsche Frauen."

women to join her in Syria.[137] Sarah was just 15 years old in the fall of 2013 when she forged her father's signature on the appropriate paperwork and purchased an airline ticket to Turkey. Sarah told friends over on social media she wanted to marry a jihadist fighter. Not long after arriving in Syria, Sarah apparently got her wish. German media sources state that in January of 2014, Sarah, still only 15 years old married the foreign fighter Ismail S.[138] Ismail's mother, Mrs. S., was already mentioned in this chapter for transporting AK-47 magazines and other equipment to Turkey in November and December of 2013. One might joke that these deliveries should be regarded as not as material support but as wedding gifts.

The third category group of the non-connected fighters has the lowest overall information density when it comes to network connections. This group includes the four fighters from the three cluster cities mentioned above. It also includes the twins Kevin and Mark K. from the North Rheine Westphalia town Catrop Rauxel. According to ISIS' propaganda magazine Dabiq, the twin converts died as suicide bombers in a battle near Baiji, Iraq.[139] Detailed German press reports about Kevin and Mark's histories reveal no specific connection to the Salafist scene, though Kevin is said have come under the "influence" of radical Salafist preachers like Ibrahim Abou Nagie and Pierre Vogel.[140] The exact radicalizing influences for these fighters remains unclear, but online social media cannot be ruled out.

The final subgroup of non-connected fighters includes four fighters who were most likely either part of the Salafist scene or mobilized in face-to-face encounters, instead of over online social media. The first, Aleaddine T., was a member of the

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[137] Ulrike Hummel, "Als 'Gotteskriegerin' in den Dschihad" [As 'female jihadist' into jihad], *Deutsche Welle*, May 4, 2014, http://dw.com/p/1BZPp.

[138] Christoph Ehrhardt and Markus Wehner, "Bis dass der Tod sie scheidet" [Until Death Do Them Part], *Frankfurter Allgemeine,* March 10, 2014, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/deutsche-dschihadisten-bis-dass-der-tod-sie-scheidet-12838855.html.

[139] "The Capture of the 4th Regiment Base," *Dabiq* 9, (April, 2015): 30, http://jihadology.net/2015/05/21/al-%E1%B8%A5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-magazine-dabiq-9/.

[140] Jörg Diehl and Roman Lehberger, "'Islamischer Staat': IS wirbt mit deutschen Terror-Zwillingen" ["Islamic State": IS advertises with German Terror-Twins], *Spiegel Online*, May 27, 2015, http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/islamischer-staat-is-wirbt-mit-terror-zwillingen-aus-deutschland-a-1035688.html.

Wolfsburg group for whom a direct connection to the other fighters could not be established through this thesis' methodology. While he cannot be linked to any individual fighter from Wolfsburg, several reports claim he was part of the group. The other three fighters in this category are Aslanbek F., Kerim Mark B., and Yannik Pipiorka.

Aslanbek F., a Chechen-German from Kiel, traveled to Syria with a group of eight other men, whose names were not identified, in December of 2012. He was killed shortly after arriving in Syria during clashes outside of Aleppo. German newspaper interviews with Aslanbek's wife reveal that in the days after his death, his family received visitors from "all over Europe" who both knew about Aslanbek's death and (like his wife) believed Aslanbek to be a martyr.[141] Before his departure Aslanbek had attended the Ibnu Taymiyya Mosque in Kiel, which has been under observation by the German authorities for radicalizing several members and sending them to fight in jihadist causes. Despite the similarities between Aslanbek's story and the stories of countless other German foreign fighters, no links could be found in German media that would connect either Aslanbek or the Ibnu Taymiyya mosque with other parts of the Salafist scene or the remaining foreign fighter profiles. Nevertheless, based on the description of Aslanbek's departure in a group of eight others and his ties to a fundamentalist mosque, it seems likely that Aslanbek was recruited and mobilized within a traditional social network and not in isolation as a *lone wolf*.[142]

Another foreign fighter who could not be directly connected to the rest of the network is Kerim Mark B.: the fighter mentioned earlier in this chapter who traveled back to Germany to have his shrapnel wound treated only to return to Syria in 2014. Kerim first appeared in German media in 2012 when his name was added to a German government list of potentially dangerous Islamists living in Germany.[143] At the time Kerim was living in Düsseldorf and was active in a Salafist mosque near the city's central

[141] Jan Liebold and Volkmar Kabisch, "Mein Mann ist ein Schahid" [My Husband is a Martyr], *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* 9 April, 2013, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/deutsche-im-syrischen-buergerkrieg-mein-mann-ist-ein-schahid-1.1644758

[142] Ibid.

[143] Drewello, "Diese Terroristen."

train depot. Like Aslanbek F., Kerim Mark B. was likely connected with the Salafist scene, but those contacts could not be verified by German press reports.

A final example of the disconnected foreign fighter is Yannik Pipiorka. Yannik was a developmentally challenged and occasionally homeless 23-year-old Polish-German. Prior to his radicalization and travel to Syria, Yannik lived on the streets in the Southern German city of Freiburg. According to acquaintances and social workers in Freiburg, Yannik encountered his jihadist recruiters "on the streets of Freiburg." Subsequent searches for evidence that Yannik may have been radicalized online were fruitless: Yannik had no social media accounts. Yannik's radicalization took place between the fall of 2013 and the summer of 2014, when he departed for Turkey and then on to Syria. In May of 2015, Yannik made headlines in Germany after he detonated an explosives-laden truck at a military checkpoint in Baiji, Iraq—killing himself and eight Iraqi soldiers.[144]

While Yannik, Kerim, and Aslanbek could not be directly linked to the rest of the German foreign fighters through the Palantir analysis, such connections likely existed. Their background stories have much more in common with the backgrounds of those who were mobilized through traditional face-to-face contact, rather than through online social media.

To review the information available on the 20 disconnected foreign fighters only seven (approximately 7% of the total group) were either clearly recruited online or likely to have been recruited online. Evidence from German press reporting strongly suggests that four others were recruited through Salafist scene contacts while there was not enough information to determine how the remaining nine were recruited. Based on this information it is possible to estimate that online recruitment accounted for between 4% to a maximum of 16% of the total foreign fighter dataset.

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[144] Alfred Hackensberger, "Die neuen IS-Kämpfer? Obdachlose und Behinderte" [The New IS-fighters? Homeless and Disabled], *Die Welt*, June 11, 2015, http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article142217606/Die-neuen-IS-Kaempfer-Obdachlose-und-Behinderte.html.

6. Bloc and Family Mobilization

Research into the mobilization and travel patterns of the 99 foreign fighters revealed that over one third (34 out of 99) traveled to the combat area in groups. For 64 of the profiles, no information about group travel was available. Only one of the 99 fighters, Yannik Pipiorka, was specifically listed in German press reports as having traveled alone.

These bloc mobilization rates are not as high as the *Verfassungsschutz* report figures, which showed that over half of the German fighters traveled with friends and only 18% traveled alone. The simplest explanation for this disparity is that the government data used in the *Verfassungsschutz* report is more thorough when it comes to travel details. It is likely that several of the 64 travelers with missing travel data traveled in groups, but that this information never made it into the hands of reporters.

As the *Verfassungsschutz* report also discovered, a surprising number of fighters in this dataset traveled to the combat area with family members. Of the 99 foreign fighters, at least ten traveled to Syria or Iraq with some combination of spouse or children. An additional 21 either traveled with or traveled to join other relatives, including spouses, brothers, sisters, and cousins. Finally, four of the 99 profiled fighters are believed to have become couples after arriving in Syria—Sarah O. and Ismail S.[145]

E. INTEGRATION IN GERMAN SOCIETY

To address the claim that jihadist radicalization is primarily driven by an integration deficit experienced by Muslim immigrants in European society, this study collected the profiled foreign fighters' migrations backgrounds, criminal history, and conversion status of the profiled foreign fighters.[146] A look at this integrations data shows mixed results. While the profiled group includes many first- and second-generation immigrants, it also contains a surprising number of native German converts who, from a cultural and linguistic perspective, would be completely integrated with

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[145] Ehrhardt and Wehner, "Bis dass der Tod" [Until Death].

[146] Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims,"120–135.

German society. Finally, the number of fighters with criminal records was lower than expected.

Testing the level of integration with this dataset was challenging. Information such as how many generations a fighter's family lived in Germany, or whether someone had dual- or single- nation citizenship was rarely reported even the most thorough press articles. Governments enjoy a clear advantage in assembling such information. Nevertheless, the available data on the 99 profiled fighters was examined for migrations background, ethnicity, conversion status, and criminal history with the expectation that highly integrated members of German society would be less inclined toward criminality.

1. Migrations Background and Ethnicity

Research on the 99 foreign fighters revealed the national origin of the families of 61 fighters. Of these 61, 13 were native Germans with both parents having German ancestry. The remaining 48 had at least one parent of non-German ancestry. Ten were identified as first-generation immigrants to Germany and 12 were identified as second or third generation immigrants.

When organized by region, the national backgrounds of the 61 fighters for whom information was available is as follows. The largest grouping was of foreign fighters with migrations backgrounds from Arab countries (25). Twenty of these were from North Africa and only 5 from the Levant and Arabian Peninsula. Sixteen had backgrounds from Western states, including the 13 native Germans and three who were half German and half American, British, and Italian respectively. Another 10 had Turkish migrations backgrounds. These family national origins are shown in Figure 14.

German press reports did not reveal family origin for the remaining 38 foreign fighters. A brief analysis of the first names and conversion status of this group reveals that only four of the 38 were identified as Muslim converts. These four also and had traditionally German-sounding names. The remaining 34 have names—like Amira, Fatih, Ismail, and Samir—which do not conclusively prove Turkish or Middle Eastern heritage, but do strongly suggest it.

Figure 14.   Migrations Background by Region (n=61)
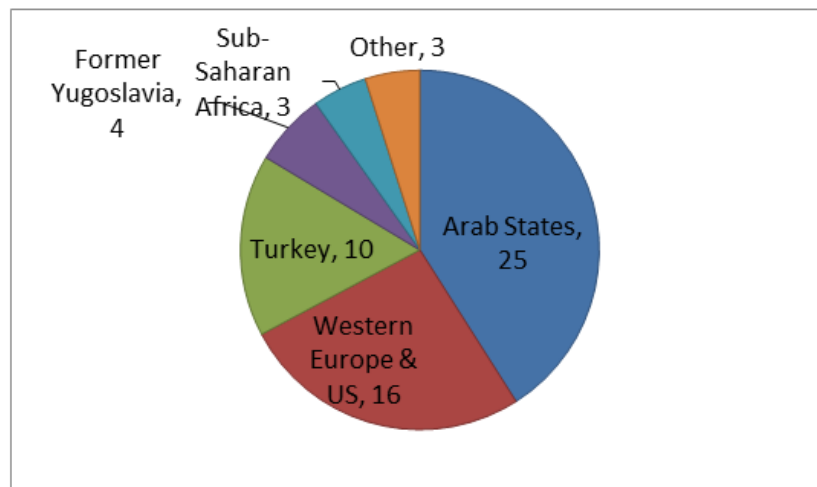
2.   Conversion Status

Of the group of 99 profiles, 23 were listed as converts to Islam. Thirteen of these 23 were native Germans with no other foreign background. These 12 had names like David Gäble, Christian Emde, and Philip Bergner. Of the remaining 10 converts, three came from decidedly Western backgrounds (US-German, UK-German, and Italian-German). Two other converts had immigration backgrounds from Ghana and one from Poland. Finally, three were identified as converts, but their ethnic and migration backgrounds could not be determined. The names of one would indicate that they are possibly of German origin, while the other two are only identified by alias.

The death rates found in this study group seem to suggest that being an Arab immigrant or birth Muslim in Germany does not translate into special treatment upon joining ISIS' ranks. Some have argued that ISIS disproportionately uses foreign fighters as "cannon fodder," and preserves the Arab fighters for less dangerous tasks.[147] Gates and Potter, for example, show that foreign fighters are often steered toward suicide missions where their relative lack of combat skill is less of a liability for the

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[147] Eli Lake, "Foreign Recruits are Islamic State's Cannon Fodder," *Bloomberg,* February 11, 2015, http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-02-11/foreign-fighters-are-islamic-state-s-cannon-fodder.

organization.[148] Eleven of the converts have died in the combat area and four have been detained following deportation from Turkey. This convert death rate aligns closely with the overall death rate among German foreign fighters (48% vs. 46%). Although the numbers are small, this finding indicates that the ethnic background of German foreign fighters does not determine their eventual assignment within jihadist organizations.

3.   Education

The education status of only 27 of the 99 fighters was available. Only two of the fighters had above a bachelor's degree. The first had an advanced degree in engineering and the other was attending medical school before leaving Germany. Four of the fighters had completed some college or were still attending universities before departing. Eleven had completed secondary school and five were identified as high-school dropouts.

4.   Criminal Background

A final measure of integration in German society is criminality. Criminality can be seen as both a symptom and a cause of poor integration in society: Disenfranchised people may have greater incentive to commit crimes and having a criminal past often excludes people from greater levels of participation in society. Criminality also fits well in the conversion narratives of many German Salafists. Denis Cuspert was in high demand at Salafist seminars not only because he was almost famous, but more importantly because his personal story of escaping from an immoral past served as an allegory for an escape from a modern *jahiliyya* (the ignorant and dark pre-Islamic era).[149]

Among the 99 foreign fighters profiled for this report, only 16 had clearly discoverable criminal backgrounds (press reports implied connections to criminal milieus for several others, but these implications were too ambiguous to warrant inclusion in the foreign fighter profiles). At 16%, these results are much lower than those found in earlier empirical studies of jihadist mobilization. The *Verfassungsschutz* report, for example,

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[148] Scott Gates and Sukanya Podder, "Social Media, Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (July 21, 2015).

[149] Baehr, "Dschihadistischer Salafismus in Deutschland" [Jihadist Salafism in Germany], 242.

found that 30% of German foreign fighters had criminal records before radicalizing.[150] The most plausible explanation for this disparity is that the German *Verfassungsschutz* researchers have access to the full range of government databases while German journalists do not.

F.   ANCHORING

Finally, the German foreign fighter profiles were examined for evidence of their biographical availability—presence or absence of anchoring factors, such as marriage, children, and busy careers. According to social movement theory, being involved in a busy job and caring for children naturally limits how much time a person has to join radical causes to begin with and particularly reduces a person's willingness to engage in more risky forms of activism.[151] Thus, the difference between being exposed to a social movement and actually deciding to join it comes down to how much time a potential recruit has available.[152]

1.   Family Status

Marriage and family status was available for 47 of the 99 profiles. Of these, 23 or nearly half were married before leaving Germany. Moreover, 17 (or 36%) had children. As mentioned above, over 10% of the profiled group traveled to the combat area with their spouse, their children, or both. Finally, only 16 of the 47 were identified as single. Like the German government data, this information suggests that having the responsibility of families to care for in Germany did little to anchor these foreign fighters or prevent their mobilization.

2.   Career

Employment information for the 99 profiled fighters was limited. Research for this project was able to discover employment data for only 30 of the 99 profiles. While

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[150] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 12.

[151] McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism," 71.

[152] Michelle Petrie, "A Research Note on the Determinants of Protest Participation: Examining Socialization and Biographical Availability," *Sociological Spectrum* 24, no. 5 (2004): 553–574.

the types of jobs identified are diverse, they were predominantly lower-skill and lower-wage jobs. The group included a computer engineer, a massage therapist, a hairdresser, a soldier, a pizza deliveryman, a sales clerk, and one gangster-rapper. Ten of the 30 were listed as full-time students, two had only partial employment, and three were listed as unemployed.

G.   CONCLUSION

Palantir network analysis of this robust dataset shows that face-to-face traditional networks remain the most important mobilization factor for jihadist foreign fighters. The network analysis in this chapter has shown that at least 80% of German foreign fighters were mobilized and radicalized within a traditional social network. This radicalizing network extends across Germany and appears entirely embedded within the politically active German Salafist scene.

While traditional social networks are the most important mobilizing factor for German foreign fighters, this analysis also finds that some fighters are indeed radicalized and recruited over the Internet. This research shows, however, that this is a very small percentage. Based on the evidence in the 99 profiles, it is possible to conclude that online radicalization accounts for between 4% and 16% of the total foreign fighter movement. Furthermore, those recruited online tend to be female and much younger than those mobilized within traditional face-to-face networks. Finally, Palantir analysis shows the foreign fighter movement in Germany to be a geographically clustered phenomenon—with over half of German foreign fighters originating from just seven German cities.

At the same time, the statistical analysis of the foreign fighter integration in German society is less clear. On the one hand, most German foreign fighters in this dataset had migrations backgrounds. As a group, they also tended to be less educated, underemployed, and were somewhat more likely to have criminal records. On the other hand, the group also included many who did not fit the above description including at least 13 native Germans as well as migrants and children of migrants who appeared completely integrated in German society before becoming radicalized.

Finally, the anchoring and biographical availability data from the 99 profiles shows over half of the German foreign fighters were well anchored in family relationships and traveled to the combat area despite this biographical unavailability. Not only did having a spouse or children not prevent these fighters from radicalizing, but also nearly half of the fighters with families brought those families with them to the combat area. At the same time, the foreign fighters in this dataset were unanchored in terms of career or job commitments.

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IV. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyzed robust empirical data from both the author's independent research and from German government reports to explain why and how over 700 German foreign fighters mobilized for a violent jihadist cause in the Middle East between 2012 and 2015. The project's most important contribution is in demonstrating that German foreign fighters are primarily mobilized through a traditional social network that is embedded in a nationwide politically active German Salafist scene. The project also showed that while Western governments often worry about the looming threat of online radicalization, verifiable examples of purely Internet-based radicalization remain rare. Finally, this thesis demonstrated that neither poor integration nor biographical availability sufficiently predicted mobilization of individual foreign fighters.

This chapter will first present the major findings of the thesis by revisiting the original hypotheses proposed in Chapter I. Next this chapter will discuss the implications of these findings for the present crisis in Syria and for the future of jihadist Salafism in the West. Finally, the chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research.

B. HYPOTHESIS EVALUATION

1. H1: German Foreign Fighters Are Mobilized Primarily Through Traditional Social Networks

H1 attempted to examine to what extent German foreign fighters were connected to one another and to their recruiters through face-to-face traditional networks prior to mobilizing. The German foreign fighter network was analyzed with the expectation that high levels of preexisting connections between fighters, geographic clustering, and high instances of bloc mobilization would be strong evidence that fighters are mobilized within traditional networks.

Network analysis of the German foreign fighter dataset overwhelmingly demonstrates that face-to-face traditional networks are the most important mobilization factor for jihadist foreign fighters. Of the 99 foreign fighter profiles analyzed for this

study 79 could be directly linked to a single interconnected network using only information gathered from open source media reporting. This analysis is further supported by the German *Verfassungsschutz* report findings, which place the phenomenon within a politically active and growing Salafist movement in Germany.

Both the author's research and the German government findings show high levels of bloc mobilization and geographic clustering. Overall bloc mobilization statistics show that between one third (author's profiles) and one half (*Verfassungsschutz* report) of all German foreign fighters traveled to the combat area with groups of friends and family. Additionally, the geographic analysis conducted in Chapter III shows that more than half of all German foreign fighters came from just seven German cities while multiple German sources cite major clusters in Dinslaken, Herford, Wolfsburg and Solingen. These findings align well with social movement theory, showing that like traditional social movements, jihadist organizers in Germany recruit within "dense social networks" and "preexisting formal and informal groups."[153]

Finally, these findings align with other research that shows foreign fighter recruitment to be a clustered phenomenon, such as Holman's study of French and Belgian foreign fighters in Iraq in 2004 and 2005. According to Holman, "two foreign fighter networks, Kari and 19th, were responsible for the bulk of these individuals. These networks were involved exclusively in supporting the movement of foreign fighters to Iraq and bringing back into Europe individuals who had been fighting or were wounded."[154]

2. H2: Social Media Has Replaced Traditional Social Networks in Mobilizing German Foreign Fighters

H2 attempted to empirically test the claim that jihadists are increasingly mobilized as *lone wolves* through online social media, instead of through face-to-face recruitment in traditional social networks. This hypothesis predicted few interpersonal

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[153] Della Porta, "Introduction: On Individual Motivations," 6.

[154] Holman, "Belgian and French Foreign Fighters," 616.

connections between fighters and geographically dispersed—rather than clustered—incidences of radicalization.

This study did find clear evidence of limited online recruitment for the German foreign fighter movement, however, the findings do not support the contention that online recruitment is growing or that it threatens to replace traditional social networks. The German *Verfassungsschutz* study finds that only 6% of German foreign fighters were recruited or mobilized solely through online social networks, while the author's network analysis in Chapter III finds the number of confirmed and likely online recruiting incidents to be somewhere between 4% and 7%.[155]

Finally, the author's analysis of the confirmed and likely cases of online recruitment shows that this group is predominantly female and younger than those mobilized though traditional social networks.

3. H3: Integrated Muslims in Germany Are Less Likely to Become Foreign Fighters

The goal of the third hypothesis was to test the contention that the poor integration of Muslims in Europe is a cause of Islamist radicalization.[156] The hypothesis predicted that the ranks of the German foreign fighter movement would be primarily filled with those who are not well integrated in German society. The hypothesis was tested using background data of the foreign fighter dataset such as migration histories (either parental or personal), citizenship, education, and employment.

Empirically proving the effect of an "integration deficit" on individual foreign fighters proved difficult for three reasons. First, the data available in both German government sources as well as published media reports is incomplete. Second, even when *objective* data were able to hint at a particular foreign fighter's level of integration, these data were still lacking an essential subjective element, that is how integrated the particular foreign fighter felt. Finally, the integration question does not account for the statistically significant numbers of converts and native Germans joining the movement.

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[155] Verfassungsschutz, *Analyse*, 14–15.

[156] Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," 25–50.

The data in both Chapter II and III do show that poor integration factors at least correlate to foreign fighter mobilization in Germany. In both the *Verfassungsschutz* report and in the author's 99 profiles, foreign fighters tended to have migration backgrounds, were frequently underemployed, unemployed and many had criminal records. At the same time, both datasets included seemingly well-integrated Germans of both foreign and native-born ancestries. Finally, the *Verfassungsschutz* report showed that German citizenship—considered to be a positively linked with societal integration—did not make Germans any less likely to join the foreign fighter movement.[157] Given the sparseness of the data, the mixed outcome of the results, and the essentially subjective component of assessing integration, this research does not support the hypothesis that poor integration is a causal factor in mobilizing foreign fighters.

4. H4: Unanchored Members Of German Society Are More Likely to Become Foreign Fighters.

The final hypothesis was also inconclusive. H4 sought to test the claim that less anchored Germans, or those with more biographical availability would be more likely to mobilize as foreign fighters.[158]

Research in this thesis did show that in terms of employment, the German foreign fighters were indeed unanchored. Many were students, unemployed, or working odd jobs in the lower paying sectors of Germany's economy. On the other hand, in terms of family anchoring factors, such as marriage and children, the German foreign fighters were well anchored. While some social movement theorists would predict that being a parent would discourage an individual from engaging in high-risk activism, this anchoring factor seemed to have little effect on the German foreign fighters.[159] The *Verfassungsschutz* report shows that about half of the German foreign fighters were married when they left for jihad.

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[157] Rabasa and Benard, *Eurojihad,* 12.

[158] McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism," 71.

[159] Ibid.

The findings on family anchoring in the German foreign fighter movement do align with previous research on Salafist jihadist. Sageman's study of global Salafist mujahedeen before 2001 for example, finds that 73% of his dataset were married. Sageman associates the high marriage rate with the tenets of Salafi Islam and argues that marriage between mujahedeen families "sealed their religious and political relationships."[160]

C.   IMPLICATIONS AND FOLLOW-ON RESEARCH

A major implication of this research concerns the unprecedented percentage of female recruits being drawn into the jihadist foreign fighter movement. This thesis demonstrated that women are more frequently recruited through online social media than their male counterparts. Additionally, women are recruited at younger ages and seem to have a much higher survival rate than their male counterparts. Only two of the 14 female foreign fighters analyzed in Chapter III have died and both of these were killed in an accident before arriving in the combat area.[161] As far as this research has been able to determine, no German female foreign fighters have died in Syria since 2012. This finding raises the question of whether it is appropriate to use the term *foreign fighter* when describing European Salafist women who travel to combat areas. Additional research into female recruitment and mobilization into foreign jihadist organizations is necessary, particularly in regard to their relationship to online recruitment. Further research might reveal how young Muslim women in Europe might gain more stature by joining a fundamentalist movement abroad. From a recruiter's perspective, online social media may be the best vehicle for reaching young women in European Muslim families

An additional area for follow on research is to take the geographic analysis in this thesis down to the neighborhood level within German cities. This thesis used German cities as a unit of analysis for German foreign fighter clustering. While this method revealed geographic clusters, it did not show whether the clustering effect continued

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[160] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 79.

[161] Flade, "Deutsche Salafistinnen sterben" [German Salafists Killed].

down to the district-, neighborhood-, or local mosque-level within German cities. A close examination of smaller geographic areas may be able to shed light on the integration factors that were not satisfactorily explained in this thesis. Neighborhood-level economic and census data, overlaid with foreign fighter mobilization data may reveal additional patterns related to Muslim immigrant integration in German society and help to refine scholarly understanding of how integration relates to foreign fighter mobilization

The most important implication of the findings presented in this thesis is the degree to which foreign fighter mobilization is interconnected with the German Salafist scene. The data confirms that four leaders, Ibrahim Abou Nagie, Pierre Vogel, Sven Lau and Bilal Gümüs, appear to be a the center of the radicalization movement. How to monitor them and their local representatives presents a true dilemma for the German government. On the one hand the German government is bound by its constitution and democratic values to protect civil liberties. On the other hand, the German government is faced with growing movement that has seen approximately 9% of its estimated 8,000 members join a foreign jihadist conflict.[162] Karl Popper expressed this dilemma, "the Paradox of Tolerance" several decades ago writing, "unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them."[163] The German government should devote resources to understanding the Salafist scene, learning to dialogue with its members and to or undermine the intolerant minority among them.

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[162] Schneiders, *Salafismus in Deutschland,* 14.

[163] Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 1: The Spell of Plato*, 5th ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 265.

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